



**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**

**COLLEGE OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE STUDIES**

**DEPARTMENT OF CENTER FOR FEDERAL STUDIES**

**ANALYZING THE NATURE AND DYNAMICS OF INTER-ETHNIC  
CONFLICTS IN FEDERAL ETHIOPIA: THE CASE OF BATI-OROMO  
AND TELALAK-AFAR ETHNIC GROUPS**

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**MAY, 2022**

**ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

**ANALYSING THE NATURE AND DYNAMICS OF INTER-ETHNIC CONFLICTS  
IN FEDERAL ETHIOPIA: THE CASE OF BATI-OROMO AND TELALAK-AFAR  
ETHNIC GROUPS**

**BY: ABDULHAKIM JEMAL AHMED**

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE STUDIES, DEPARTMENT OF CENTER FOR FEDERAL STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF ART IN FEDERALISM AND GOVERNANCE STUDIES.

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This is to certify that the study conducted by Abdulhakim Jemal Ahmed entitled Analysing The Nature and Dynamics of Inter-Ethnic Conflicts in Federal Ethiopia: The Case of Bati-Oromo And Telalak Afar Ethnic Groups, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts in Federalism and Governance studies complied with the regulations of Addis Ababa University and met the accepted standards with respect to quality and originality.

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## DECLARATION

I, Abdulhakim Jemal Ahmed, pronounce that this thesis submitted to Addis Ababa University, College of Law and Governance Studies, Department of Centre for Federal Studies is my original work and has not been presented in any other university yet. I, again, confirm that the sources of all kinds incorporated in this study have been duly acknowledged through proper reference and citation rules of American Psychological Association (APA).

\_\_\_\_\_

Abdulhakim Jemal Ahmed

May, 2022

Addis Ababa University

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as an advisor for the candidate.

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## Acronyms

BFGDM	Bati Focus Group Discussion Member
BWI	Bati Woreda In-depth Interviewee
BWK	Bati Woreda Key Informant
CSA	Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ICG	International Crisis Group
PCM	Peace Committee Member
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
TWFGDM	Telalak Woreda Focus Group Discussion Member
TWI	Telalak Woreda In-depth Interviewee
TWK	Telalak Woreda Key Informant
UN	United Nation
WWII	Second World War

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## Abstract

*This study focused on analysing the nature and dynamics of Bati-Oromo and Telalak-Afar ethnic conflict since 1991 with respect to its causes, attempts to resolve the conflict and factors for its failure, newly emerging issues that escalated and deescalated the conflict, and also the current status of the conflict. To deal these objectives, qualitative research approach, both descriptive and exploratory in nature, and a case study design were employed. Both primary and secondary data were used in the study. Accordingly, to collect the primary data, a total of forty eight (48) informants (18 in-depth interview informants, 12 FGD members and 18 key informants were selected through purposive sampling technique. The data, which were obtained from semi-structured interviews, document analysis and secondary sources were thematically analysed. The finding of the study depicted that elite politics and non-demarcated boundary were the underlying causes that led to territorial claim between the two ethnic groups. This conflict was repeatedly exacerbated by proximate causes such as breakdown of law and justice, cattle rustling and charcoal production, etc. In order to solve the conflict, several efforts were taken by modern and traditional conflict resolution institutions. However, their endeavours have become futile due to high involvement of political elites in the resolution process and incapacitation of local elders to handle inter-ethnic conflicts, the complexity of the issue beyond the realm of traditional methods, geo-political factors, socio-cultural causes, lack of early warning and preventive mechanisms and misunderstanding of the conflict causes (ignoring the root causes during resolution process). The 2018 political change and the outbreak of COVID- 19 were the two most important dynamics that were escalating and de-escalating the conflict at different times. Currently, there is a considerable mutual distrust, enmity, murder, absence of conflict resolution efforts and amicable relations between the two ethnic groups.*

Key words: Telalak Afar, Bati Oromo, Cause of Ethnic Conflict, Conflict Dynamics

# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Conflicts are natural phenomena to occur in lives of human beings. However, depending on their intensity, conflicts may be violent or nonviolent. Conflicts are not always negative phenomena, but, it is our capacity to respond, which determines the course of conflict, which in turn shapes the dynamics of conflict [and its outcomes] (Mbalanya, 2012). Ethnic conflicts are one category of such conflicts which is occurred between or among ethnic groups wherein ethnic difference is central to the conflict. This includes identity conflict where warring groups claim power because of a particular identity, such as clan (e.g. Somalia), religion (e.g. Nigeria, the Philippines) or language (e.g. Namibia) (Smith, 2004).

Ethnic conflict is the previous and contemporary problem of the world which has been leading to war and also genocide. This confirms that ethnic conflict as a major reality of our time is not only because of its ubiquity but also its cumulative increase in frequency and intensity of occurrence.

The problem of ethnic conflict in Africa is widespread and real as ethno political conflicts have been increasing throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There is a general perception that Africa is trapped in a never-ending cycle of ethnic conflict. The Rwandan genocide, Darfur, northern Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, and the violent aftermath of the controversial Kenyan elections, among other cases, seemingly substantiate this perception. As grievances accumulate and are defined at the group rather than individual level, the motivation for reprisals is never ending. This, in turn, cripples prospects for sustained economic progress and democratization (Aapengnuo, 2010).

The Horn of Africa is one of the most conflict prone regions of Africa since the region is ethnically diverse and politically volatile (Aremu, 2010; Mekonnen, 2010). Tracing back to the early times to the present days and potentially in the future, the Horn of Africa is the most volatile, fragile and exposed to numerous inter and intra-state disputes. This is due to socio-political, economical and historical origins since there is no one size for all recipe (Mengistu, 2015). Ethnic related violent conflicts in the Horn of Africa have caused suffering and extensive damages to life and property. It also has been continuing to affect the overall economic development and security in the region (Mekonnen, 2010).

As many of the scholars and literatures argue, ethnic conflicts are still critical challenges in Ethiopia too. They notified that federalism can exacerbate the very problems it seeks to address (Muhabie, 2015). Although ethnic conflicts have not reached at horrible and catastrophic level as it was seen in Yugoslavia and Rwanda, several ethnic conflicts have been occurring since ethnic identity gained constitutional recognition in Ethiopia. Especially, after the 2018 Ethiopia's political change, the effects of ethnic conflict became more aggravated.

Several inter-ethnic tensions have been erupting in different corners of Ethiopia Since the restructuring of the country using ethnic federalism. Few of them embrace Amhara-Kemant (Addis Admas News, 2008 E.C); Gofa-Gamo, Afar-Oromo, Amhara-Oromo, Amhara-Gumuz, Borana-Gerri (Somali) (Sisay, 2007); Gedeo-Guji (Alemante, 2003); Anywaa Nuer, Anywaa- Majangir (Feissa, 2010); Silte-Gurage, Sheka-Mejangir, Berta-Gumuz, Gedeo-Guji, WOGAGODA conflict (United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Ethiopia, 2012) as cited in Demissew (2016).

More importantly, pastoral areas, in Ethiopia, are conflict hotspots where states failed to properly fulfil their social, economic and political functions. The conflict between Bati Oromo and Telalak Afar is one of such ethnic conflicts that eroded the historical ties of Afar and Oromo communities in the study area. Indeed, the historical relations of these communities were largely pacific despite some water and grassing land associated sporadic combats. Nevertheless, in the last five years, their contests have been fundamentally transformed into the intent of acquiring more territorial bases, and the conflicts between the two ethnic groups became exacerbated and more violent.

The conflict becomes disastrous at one time and waned at another and hindered sustainable peace in the area. This conflict produced several destructive outcomes upon both ethnic groups. In this conflict, in 2016, there were loss of human lives (5 persons were killed), 17 individuals were injured, 322 citizens were displaced, 32 houses were burnt, private and public properties were damaged, basic human and democratic rights were violated in both communities and feeling of insecurity was prevailed (Conflict Resolution plan obtained from Bati Woreda, 2009). The conflict also constrained free movement of people and development activities in the conflict zones. Moreover, historical and cultural relations, and symbiotic ties between these communities remained a mere memory.

This demonstrates the solemnity of the conflict and it was the prime factor that triggered the researcher to conduct this study. Thus, this study aims to investigate the nature of Telalak Afar and Bati Oromo inter-ethnic conflicts since 1991 in relation to its root causes, dynamics, factors for the failure of conflict resolution efforts and current realities.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

As Wimmer stated, “over the past decades, ethno nationalist conflict has become the dominant form of mass political violence as the overwhelming majority of civil wars in the post-war era were fought in the name of ethno-national autonomy. Since the 1950s, the number of ethnic conflicts continued to increase and the trend reached a peak from 1993-1994” (Wimmer, 1997). Not only this, the Uppsala Conflict Data Project (UCDP) also depicted that for the 13-year period, 1990-2002, there were 58 major armed conflicts in the world, of which, on close examination, ethnic related ones constituted a considerable number, with the following regional distribution: Africa (19), America (5), Asia (17), Europe (8) and Middle East (9) (Erikson, 2001).

In Africa, since the mid-1960s, there have been extended and prolonged ethnic-related violent political conflicts, including in some cases, civil wars in the following countries: Congo Brazzaville, Algeria, Chad Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire), Eritrea Cote d’Ivoire, Liberia Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Mali, Niger Republic, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan Sierra Leone, the, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Uganda and Ethiopia (Jinadu, 2007). The conditions that lead to these conflicts are many and vary from country to country.

However, there are at least three common general factors that make interethnic conflicts similar in Africa. One is the relative newness of the state-building process in Africa (political boundaries of African countries are arbitrary made by their masters), bad governance and the excessive extroversion of African economies, which undermines the development of economic interdependence among ethnic groups, regions, and economic sectors in Africa.

Ethiopia was one of the few African countries that adopted a novel approach to state building. In 1991, the country instituted a federal arrangement along ethnic lines in an attempt to resolve its chronic nationalist questions and avoid further conflicts. However, 10 years after the implementation of the strategy, Ethiopia remained and overly involved in ethnic strife (Mengisteab, 2001). Hence, though ethnic federalism was introduced as remedy to address

these inter-ethnic related problems in Ethiopia, numerous ethnic conflicts continued to happen. There is also a consensus among scholars that the inter-ethnic group conflicts, in Ethiopia, particularly in recent times, have been increasing (Asnake, 2013).

As a result, so as to offer scholarly solutions to these ethnic based confrontations, plentiful studies were conducted by scholars. These studies include, but not limited to, the inter-ethnic conflict of Hadiya and Halaba by Daniel (2015), Borena and Garri by Tigst (2014), Guji and Burji by Ruth (2017), Guji and Gedeo by Atre (2018), Derashe and Konso by Yidnekachew (2012), Guji and Borena by Golelcha (2015), Moyale conflicts in southern Ethiopia by Abebe (2016), and inter-ethnic conflict transformation in Asossa Woreda by Amare (2013). However, most of these studies were conducted in the southern part of the country which is the home of many ethnic groups. It is due to the fact that heterogonous societies are relatively exposed to ethnic based conflict comparing to the homogenous ones.

Few studies were also conducted on the conflict between Afar and their bordering ethnic groups. For instance, Muaaz (2009) and Biniam (2016) studied Afar-Issa's conflict. However, as per their findings, those interethnic conflicts were basically associated with access to and control over Awash River banks. Some researches were conducted on the conflict between Wollo-Oromo and Afar as well. These are the conflict of Ada'ar Afar and Bati Oromo by Abdulaziz (2019), inter-ethnic conflict between Afar-Amhara border area around Chifra woreda by Muktar and Estifanose (2019), and Chifra and Bati Oromo by Mohammed (2018). However, the targets of these studies were confined to profile, causes, actors and impacts of the conflict.

As a result, *the conflict resolution attempts* exerted by both modern and traditional institutions to resolve the conflict, responsible factors that contributed to the failure of those attempts, *newly emerged local, national and international dynamics* which escalated and de-escalated the conflict and *the current status* of the conflict in the study areas *were not scientifically analysed* and remained untouched affairs. So as to fill these *thematic, methodological* and *geographical* lacunas or gaps observed in previous empirical studies, this study was conducted to analyse the nature and dynamics of an inter-conflict between Bati Oromo and Telalak Afar ethnic groups since 1991. Finally, the study is expected to provide scientific inputs for the stakeholders who are responsible to mitigate the conflict at hand.

### 1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study incorporated a general objective and other specific objectives.

#### 1.3.1 General Objective of the Study

The general objective of this research is to analyse the nature and dynamics of an inter-ethnic conflict between Wollo Oromo since 1991 and Afar with a special focus to Bati and Telalak Woredas of the two ethnic groups respectively.

#### 1.3.2 Specific Objectives of the Study

- ❖ To explore the underlying causes that lead Telalak Afar and Bati Oromo ethnic groups in to recurrent conflicts
- ❖ To investigate the previous attempts exerted by modern and traditional institutions to solve the conflict and the justifications behind its failures to bring the intended objectives
- ❖ To analyse local, national and international dynamics that were escalating and de-escalating an inter-ethnic conflict in the study area
- ❖ To scrutinize the current status of the conflict between Telalak-Afar and Bati-Oromo ethnic groups

### 1.4. Research Questions

Based on the research objectives mentioned above, this study tried to answer the following research questions.

- ☞ What are the root and triggering causes that lead Telalak Afar and Bati Oromo ethnic groups into recurrent conflicts?
- ☞ What kinds of efforts were exerted by both the traditional and modern conflict resolution institutions so as to manage, resolve and transform the conflict?
- ☞ Why did the previous conflict management and resolution efforts remain unsuccessful to realize its intended objectives?
- ☞ How did the local, national (particularly, the 2018 political reform) and international dynamics play its role in exacerbating and waning the conflict in the study area?
- ☞ What looks like the current status of the conflict which has been shaped and reshaped by various dynamics?

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Given that the study examines the inter-ethnic conflict between Bati Oromo and Telalak Afar ethnic groups, it helps to aware the root causes of the conflict, the factors behind the failure of the previous conflict resolution efforts and post-conflict trends in general. Therefore, it contributes new knowledge regarding the nature and dynamics of Bati Oromo and Telalak Afar inter-ethnic conflict. It also offers a new insight for governmental and non-governmental conflict management and resolution practitioners and other stakeholders who are involved in managing and resolving the conflict. Besides, the study may alleviate gaps of existing literatures in the study area and serve as a springboard for further studies.

## **1.6 Scope/Delimitation of the Study**

This study is geographically, thematically and methodologically confined. Geographically, this study is delimited to the inter-ethnic conflict between Telalak Afar and Bati Oromo, which are located in North East part of Ethiopia, particularly in Hari-Rasu Zone of Afar region and Oromia special Zone of Amhara region respectively, since 1991.

Thematically, this study focused on investigating the causes of the conflict in the study area, the reasons behind the failure of the previous conflict management and resolution efforts and the current trends of the conflict between Bati Oromo and Telalak Afar ethnic groups, and the local, national and international dynamics which escalated and de-escalated the conflict.

Methodologically, this study adopted a qualitative research approach based on interpretive research paradigm and case study research design. This research is both descriptive and exploratory research type in nature. So as to accomplish, this study, the researcher used purposively selected in-depth-informants, key informants and FGDs, and document analysis as data collection methods. And finally, the data were analysed based on thematic data analysis.

## **1.7 Limitation of the Study**

While conducting this study, the researcher faced the following limitations. Firstly, the occurrence of an international epidemic virus (COVID-19) forced the researcher to interrupt the data collection process and thereby, delay the completion of the study. Secondly, there was some unwillingness on the part of the informants since both ethnic groups suspected the researcher as a spy. Thirdly, since government officials and political leaders from both ethnic

groups were parts of key informants and FGD, there was absenteeism and bureaucratic delay to give the required data, and lack of willingness on some officials to access official documents related to the conflict. This made the process of data collection somehow complex and laborious.

However, so as to avoid the impacts of the aforementioned limitations upon the findings of the study, the researcher took different alternatives as remedial action. Firstly, the researcher used field assistants from each ethnic groups to aware the respondents that the study merely aimed at academic purpose, and thus would serve as an input to solve their conflict. Consequently, the field assistants helped the researcher in persuading the interviewees that the researcher is neutral (neither Afar nor Oromo). Hence, field assistants played a great role to create trust between the informants and the researcher. Secondly, the researcher gathered the required data from the study area by giving an extended period of time with patience as a remedy to COVID-19 epidemic and bureaucratic challenges to keep the findings of the study free from personal speculation and bias.

### **1.8. Organization of the Thesis**

This study has been organized into seven chapters. The first chapter deals with the introduction part of the study including background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, etc. The second chapter covers review of related literatures consisting of definition of key concepts, theoretical framework, empirical reviews and conceptual framework related to the study. The third chapter deals with research methodology regarding how the research was accomplished.

Moreover, the root causes of the conflict were discussed in the fourth chapter. The fifth chapter was devoted to analyse different attempts exerted by conflict resolution institutions so as to solve the conflict between Bati Oromo and Afar ethnic groups and responsible factors for the failure of those attempts. The sixth chapter explained the local, national and international dynamics that shaped and reshaped the conflict at various times and the current reality of the conflict. Finally, in chapter seven, the researcher forwarded conclusion and recommendations based on the analysed data and findings of the study.

### **1.9 Ethical Considerations**

To the possible extent, the researcher tried to accomplish this study based on scientific research ethics. As Creswell stated research ethics is the “moral’ principle guiding research

from its inception through the completion and publication of results and beyond. Ethical issues are becoming a crucial element in scientific research (Creswell, 1994). Accordingly, the researcher tried to consider all the research ethics expected from a researcher. First of all; all the interviews, including the instruments utilized, were conducted based on the informed consent of all respondents. Secondly, the names of all participants of the study have not been directly mentioned, instead, the researcher used codes/anonymous given to them. In addition, due consideration was given in acknowledging all types of information taken from secondary sources so as to avoid committing plagiarism. Finally; as much as possible, a maximum effort was made to avoid bias and personal speculation so as to ensure objectivity of the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Review of Related Literatures: Conceptual, Theoretical and Empirical Frameworks**

#### **2. Introduction**

The aim of this thesis was to analyse the nature and dynamics of Bati-Oromo and Telalak Afar inter-ethnic conflicts since 1991. In line with this, this chapter has been classified in to three main themes. The first part is about related literatures that deals conceptual and theoretical frameworks. While conceptual framework is vital to understand the overall impression of the study, theoretical underpinnings help to conceptualize key concepts of ethnic conflict, i.e. the essence of ethnicity and causes of ethnic conflict, from various perspectives. The second section provides a review of some selected literatures that the

researcher supposed to be relevant to the objectives of the study. Finally, the third part examines about empirical studies which are related to the existing study. Accordingly, some empirical studies were selected; and its main objectives and findings were discussed in a form of comparison to the existing study.

## **2.1 Understanding Key Concepts and Related Scenarios**

### **2.1.1 Defining Conflict, Ethnicity, Ethnic group and Ethnic Conflict**

Conflict is a social phenomenon inherent to all societies. In human beings' live, divergence of interests and opinions and conflicts are natural; they can occur in the interior of an individual; they may emerge between two or many individuals, groups or organizations, states, etc. Briefly, conflicts can be taken place at all levels - from the local to the global level; from intra-individual to the group level (Mbalamya, 2012). Conflict arises from a clash of perceptions, goals, or values in a domain where people care about the outcome. The seeds of conflict may be sown in confusion about, or disagreement with, the common purpose and how to achieve it (Scannell, 2010).

Conflict may also be manifested through adversarial social action, involving two or more actors with the expression of differences often accompanied by incompatibilities and intense hostilities. If conflict is associated with incompatible/contradictory goals, where do the goals come from? Galtung and Webel gave best analysis for these fundamental questions as follow.

*Goals come from Nature, Culture and Structure. Nature is in us, and around us; Culture is in us as internalized values and norms; and Structure is around us as institutionalized, positive and negative, sanctions. Individual actors have goals, among them are basic needs derived from Nature, values from Culture and interests from Structure; goals are positively coupled (harmonious, compatible) which define peace; negatively coupled (disharmonious, incompatible) which define conflict (Webel and Galtung, 2007:4).*

Conflict may be occurred targeting a certain ethnicity and may take the form of ethnic conflict. So as to conceptualize ethnic conflict, understanding ethnicity is of a great importance. The word 'ethnicity' was originated from a Greek term 'ethnos', which represents a nation. In Ancient Greek, it was used to define a people of common descent or a kinship group linked by blood ties. Accordingly, the origin of the term and its original meaning are commonly agreed. However, the more contemporary meaning of ethnicity, its

implications for the relations of the states and its people, and the definitions given to it are greatly vary and disputed among academics and politicians due to its ever more politicized nature (Wolf, 2006).

Ethnicity has been exposed for various subjective interpretations as some cognize it as ancestry in contrary to those who see it as physical attribute. Hence, while ethnicity is defined as an affiliation or identification with an ethnic group on the one hand, it is viewed subjectively as it is considered to be the by-product of human sentiment and mind. It is, thus, a matter of identification [ancestry] or a sense of belongingness to a certain ethnic group [physical attribute] (Yatman, 1991) as cited in (Yang, 2000).

Other scholars describe ethnicity as a shared pattern of features like nationality, cultural heritage, race, language and religion (Habtamu, 2013). Similarly, Erikson also argued that the first fact of ethnicity is applying strategic divisions between insiders and outsiders as between us and them. If such principles are not existed, there can't be no ethnicity; because, ethnicity is regarded as an established relationship between defined categories whose members understand each other to be culturally typical. Hence, two or more groups who consider themselves as being typical may tend to become more similar and simultaneously concerned with their distinctiveness if their mutual contact increases; i.e., ethnicity is established through social contact (Erikson, 2010).

Yang on the other hand argued that ethnicity is objective which is constituted based on some objective features and constructed by power relationships and social forces. It is thus highly depend on desires of individuals. It follows that ethnicity is the sum total of subjective perceptions and objective characteristics like culture, descent or national origin (Yang, 2000).

Although the terms ethnicity and ethnic group are actuality related and often used interchangeably, a number of scholars tried to divide them. According to Avruch, whereas ethnicity is an integral part of culture used to establish ethnic groups, ethnic groups refers to social groups based upon accepted ties of shared ethnicity, especially around history, kinship, language, or religion of members and (Avruch, 1998). Similarly, Yang viewed ethnic group as a social group based upon ancestry, culture or national origin while he described ethnicity as an identification or affiliation with an ethnic group (Yang, 2000). To sum up, while Ethnic groups are a group of people who suppose that they are culturally unique, ethnicity is the bond that ties ethnic groups naturally, instrumentally or through spontaneous changes. Any contradiction that affects the interests of these groups leads to ethnic conflict.

Ethnic conflict is defined as a range of events from articulation of discontent, protest, mobilization, confrontation, sporadic or sustained violence, and civil war or insurrection in which ethnicity plays a significant role (Smith, 2000). Ethnic conflict may arise between or among ethnic groups, or between ethnic groups and the state. Ethnicity needs not to play a primary role in order for an event to be considered as ethnic conflict, but must be significant enough to be mentioned as a contributing factor in the standard academic references used to construct the ethnic conflict scale. Further, ethnic conflict may occur over access to material goods as well as over intangible goods such as power, respect or social status (Smith, 2000). In general, Ethnic conflict is a form of conflict caused by material and non-material aspects wherein ethnicity became the main spot either intrinsically or instrumentally.

### **2.1.2 Inter-Ethnic conflict in Africa and the Horn of Africa**

Violent conflicts adversely affect development in many societies by diverting resources from it has been intended to conflict management, resolution and transformation tasks. So as to resolve violent conflicts and ensure relatively permanent peace in conflict affected zones, it is mandatory to comprehend the basic causes behind it (Bereketeab, 2013). Inter-ethnic conflicts have been continuing to be a severe problem across Africa (Mamdani, 2009). In Africa, inter-ethnic conflicts and other regional conflicts are responsible for half a million deaths each year, including 300,000 in armed conflicts (Correa, 2013).

While some of these conflicts are fuelled by socio-economic and political competition, others have arisen due to deep rooted ethnicity and stereotype that came from the ‘divide and rule’ policy of colonizers (Mamdani, 2009). The UN General Secretary Report on Africa (1999), on its part, stated the multi-ethnic character and politicization of ethnicity in Africa as a cause for ethnic conflicts. What we can understand from the aforementioned literatures is that stiff competition for economic resources, political power and deep rooted ethnic divisions arisen from colonial legacies are among the responsible factors for the recurrent ethnic conflicts in Africa and its related outcomes.

Inter-ethnic conflicts in the Horn of Africa are also common and ignited by multifaceted sociocultural, ecological, political and economic dynamics. Mostly, these recurrent conflicts are related to struggle over water resources and grazing lands. The increment of small arms and weapons is also another triggering cause of conflict in the Horn (Yohannes & Zerihun, 2005). Generally, ethnic tension and conflict due to scarcity of resources, poverty, widespread availability of small arms and armed group and political instability are some of

the features of the horn region. Consequently, all these factors, accompanied by its geopolitical importance, highly affect peace and stability of the region.

Horn of Africa is more vulnerable area According to Stohl and Hogendoorn (2010), Horn of Africa is characterized by proliferation of small arms, particularly Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda, and all of these countries have seen long periods of unrest and internal armed conflict in Arms Management Programme-2008. RECSA compiled regional government statistics, which suggest that there were “650,000 illicit SALW in circulation” in Kenya, “an estimated 320,000 guns (both licit and illicit) in the hands of Ethiopian civilians”, and from 15,000 to 200,000 “firearms were in the hands of civilians in Uganda (UNSCAR, 2007).

In Ethiopia and across the Horn of Africa, these small arms have been used to kill thousands of people in conflict, cattle rustling and criminal activities. Thousands more are injured, terrorized or are displaced making them Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) or refugees (Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons (RECSA) Workshop Report, 2006). Thus, Ethiopia and other Horn states ratified Nairobi Protocol for Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa , which compels signatories to dispose of confiscated and unlicensed small arms and light weapons (SALWs) (Arms Management Programme (Aemro, 2017).

### **2.1.3 Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia: Expectations, Realities and Debates**

The turn of the 19th C. was a turning point when the history of ethnic conflicts were traced back and the formation of the modern Ethiopia was commenced by incorporating diverse ethnic groups using both forceful subjugation and peaceful persuasion (Merera, 2011). Those newly incorporated groups were forced to enter in to assimilation process to adapt the dominant’s language and culture via abandoning their prior identities.

After the downfall of the monarchical system in 1974 and the Dergue regime began to rule the country and nationalist questions continued to be intensified, and as a result, ethnically organized groups were formed and fought to defeat the socialist regime. This led to the end the Dergue’s rule and the formation of an interim transitional charter and government by the liberation groups (Markakis, 2003).

So as to accommodate ethnic diversity and solve long lived ethnic related conflicts, a new form of political paradigm based on linguistic federalism was introduced since 1991. But what has been happening is not the expected, but unexpected one since violent inter-ethnic conflicts have been frequently occurred here and there. This is to mean that though the FDRE constitution came up with ethnic federal formula, its fruit is even bitterer than before as the degree of ethnic conflict has been continuing to be exacerbated in almost all corners of the country (Abera, 2009); and thus, the post 1991 ethnic conflicts are greatly varied in terms of its intensities, causes, actors, effects and [the dynamics that shape and reshape it] with compare to inter-ethnic conflicts which were occurred prior to the introduction of ethnic federalism (Getachew, 2001).

However, despite ethnic federalism encountered a set of challenges in managing and solving protracted inter-ethnic conflict and tensions, various scholarly and politicians have still optimistic outlook to ethnic based federalism and have continued to support it since its induction. Accordingly, they assert that ethnic federalism is a means to accommodate ethnic diversity and decrease secessionist tendencies. To give an example in this regard, Hechter (2000) argues that Ethnic federalism decreases the demand for secession in Ethiopia since it accommodates diversity through ensuring self-government. On contrary to this, there are immense scholars who make the ethnic federalism political paradigm responsible, by its own sake, for protracting inter-ethnic conflicts these days. For example, Zerihun and Samuel argue as follows.

*Although federalism is taken by many as a typical strategy to minimize ethnic conflict and promote democracy in multi-ethnic societies, the Ethiopian experience largely suggests that the system is not reducing ethnic tensions and conflicts. Ethnicity being the major organizing principle of the federal system in the country, promotes conflicts stressing the primordial notions of ethnicity and mobilization. It has encouraged differences and competition over the control of power and resources at a local level. Thus, conflicts are increasing, becoming more decentralized and protracted (Zerihun and Samuel, 2018:105).*

Some scholars, on the other hand, place themselves at the middle of the above two extremes. Abbink (2006), for instance, emphasizes that ethnic federalism played a great role to recognize cultural and linguistic rights of ethnic groups in the country. However, this has also generated localized ethnic conflicts though ethnic federalism was initially supposed to

manage ethno-linguistic diversities and conflicts. However, the underlying structure by and in its own sake couldn't be blamed to be the main cause of the already happened recurrent conflicts. In this regard, we will see the causes of inter-ethnic conflicts below.

#### **2.1.4 Causes of Inter-Ethnic Conflicts: Ethiopia in Focus**

Different scholars employed their effort to explain the causes of ethnic conflict. These causes are a number of interrelated factors, but vary depending on the nature of circumstances. In relation to this, Feyissa explicated three basic variables which are interrelated for ethnic conflicts to happen: identity, resources and power variables. Hence, Divergent ethnic identities can be potential causes for ethnic conflict (identity variable), free access to and control over natural resources may lead to ethnic conflict (resource variable) and various forms of inclusion into a multinational state create ethnic conflicts by changing power relations of ethnic groups and preventing an alternative national identities (power variable) (Feyissa, 2010). Hence, according to him, power, resource and identity are root causes on which ethnic conflicts are revolved around.

Habitamu, on the other hand, related causes of conflict with economic, social and political affairs by defining conflict as any form of dispute or expression of resentment that is occurred because of some economic, social and / political matters. He further explained that the principal causes for conflicts include competition over scarce resources like land, absence of well-defined borders which lead to territorial claims, developmental inequalities, marginalization and discrimination, aspirations for power, misinterpretations/misconceptions, religious [and linguistic] diversities and cultural practices like blood feuds. However, recent studies reveal that desires for greater share of various resources seem to be the major cause of conflict (Habtamu, 2013). This largely goes in line with Ethiopian realities as we shall see later.

Steven wolf, in his part, described that ethnic security dilemma is at the centre of causal explanations in a wide range of ethnic conflicts. This security dilemma incorporates physical security (survival of the group members), political security (being free from government's oppression and having meaningful access to political participation), social and economic security (freedom from exclusive regimes which deny equal opportunities of social and economic advancement to group members), cultural security (freedom from forceful assimilation), and environmental security (freedom from environmental destruction and resource scarcity) (Wolf, 2006).

Hence, the bottom line of Wolf's point of view is that ethnic groups enter in to conflict as they fear that their opponents have relative advantages over them, which threatens the very physical, economic, political, social and cultural securities of their groups. When we came to the Ethiopian experience as well, numerous scholars associated ethnic conflicts with multiple and interrelated causes. For instance, Gebre-Egziabher (2007) identified three major causes for the increment of inter-ethnic conflicts in the post-1991 Ethiopia. These are:

[First], *Ethno-Centric Federalism and Ethno-Centric Politics: ethnic based regional boundaries and non-clarity resulted in the separation of ethnic groups from their traditional resource bases*; [second], *using ethnicity for political mobilization (Politicisation of Ethnicity): ethnicity becomes the most efficient base for political mobilization, and it gives enough ground for new local elites to compete for power on the basis of ethnicity*; [third], *Dissatisfactions that exist in the country as a result of absence of public accountability and non-observance of the rule of law by government officials result in grievances that eventually lead to conflict situations*.

The central essence that we perceive from the above argument is that none of the three factors denounce the structure of ethnic federalism, by its own sake, to be a sufficient cause to the recurrent ethnic conflicts which have been come to light in the post 1991 federal Ethiopia. Because, the first point indicates the existence of poor boundary demarcation which leads to territorial claim (a political problem which results in economic confrontation in the name of ethnicity); in the second point, we observe that ethnicity is instrumentally manipulated by political elites (ethnicity as a means to an end); and the final point highlights how institutional degeneration leads to ethnic conflict.

More importantly, by analysing ten empirical studies conducted by ten different scholars (namely, the Silte-Gurage, the Berta-Gumuz, the Sheko-Megengir, the Anuak-Nuer, the Gedeo-Guji, the Afar-Issa, the Oromo-Amhara, the Oromo-Somali and the Borana-Gerri and the Wagagoda language conflicts), Lubo (2012) classified the principal causes of the post 1991 between or among ethnic conflicts into three basic scenarios: socio-political, socio-cultural and socio-economic ones.

Finally, he came to the conclusion that ethnic disparities have little role to do with the formation of ethnic conflicts in the post 1991 federal Ethiopia. However, ethnicity or tribalism can serve as a means for other ends and generate conflicts among/between ethnic groups. In over all, the bottom line what we can infer from the previous analysis is that

ethnicity, in its primordial context, is not as such a sufficient condition for inter-ethnic conflict. The findings of this study also strongly affirmed it (refer chapter four, five and six).

Besides, recurrent droughts, resource appropriation, livestock raiding, proliferation of small arms, and illicit trade contribute to the perpetuation of violent conflicts (Hundie, 2010). UNSCAR also supported that proliferations of small arms are the other causes of ethnic conflict. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and ammunition, commercialization of cattle trafficking, private enclosures of pasture and political polarization have increased the stakes of conflict in pastoralist communities. For example, in early 2017, some 10,000 pastoralists armed with automatic rifles raided farms, wildlife reserves and conservancies in Laikipia, Kenya, attacking wildlife, people and raiding livestock (UNSCAR, 2007).

#### **2.1.5 Dynamics of Inter-Ethnic Conflicts: The case of Ethiopia**

Due to the changing national and international conditions, conflict can be shaped and reshaped over a period of time. According to Ruth (2017), among many factors of conflicts, competition over resource, injustices, human right abuse, maladministration and political exclusion are among the determinant once which are shaping and reshaping conflicts throughout the world.

Moreover, according to the study conducted by United Nations Development program (UNDP) (2015), there are multiple causes of ethnic conflict in Ethiopia. Among others, competition over pastoral resources, like land and water, highly polarized ethnic identity, demands for ethnic based border demarcation and changes induced in to pre-existing conflict with the adoption of federal system, which shifted historical and territorial conflicts, mainly in pastoralist areas of Ethiopia. Furthermore, according to the study conducted by Department of International Development (DFID), conflict dynamics are caused by multiplicity and complex sets of interlocking factors (Nasongo, 2015). This tells us economic, social, political changes at local, national and international levels (as we shall better to discuss it in chapter five) can be described as conflict dynamics which are responsible for escalating and de-escalating ethnic conflicts.

#### **2.1.6 Conflict Resolution Mechanisms**

Since antiquity to now, conflict management has been practiced in different parts of the world with the objective of reducing problems within individuals, ethnic groups, societies,

countries and so forth. It is principally aimed at solving of disputes or conflicts of many kinds amicably so as to establish peace (Nathan, 1996). Conflict management refers to the containment of conflict that has been already broken out in the form of searching for solution that would reduce the levels of violence and preventing its escalation (Fisher et al, 2000). As the authors stated, eliminating the inclination of conflict, which can be changed in to violence, by encouraging positive behavioural changes among [between] parties involved in conflict, is at the centre of conflict management. It is concerned with the ways and means to control and harmonize conflictual relationship with the objective of creating of space for the long term resolution of the root causes of the conflict (Imobighe, 2005).

Conflicts could be managed via strategies and institutions. The conflict management process through strategies encompasses adjudication, reconciliation and augmentation. However, the effectiveness of these strategies highly depends on the contending bodies' commitment to reconcile with one another and their commitment to agree over a third party's decision as final and binding. Nevertheless, the ultimate objectives of these strategies are to minimize and handle conflicts between or among parties with different interests (Deng et al, 2010).

The institutional aspect of conflict management mechanism is concerned with the implementation of strategies, conflicting parties' processes of interaction. This includes parties presentation of their demands based on this institutions propose a policy and strategy to manage conflicts. However, the institutions which collect demands and grievances should demonstrate the dynamic process by which contending parties can put its thrust on the institutions (ibid). In the same way, Ginty contends that conflict management strategies should not be directed towards addressing violence rather the effort should focus on describing and satisfying human needs which frequently lead to violence (Ginty, 2006).

### **2.1.7 The Process of Conflict Management and Resolution in Ethiopia**

It is obvious that Ethiopia is the mosaic where more than 80 ethnic clusters living together with various language dialects, histories, religious and cultural identities. It leads to the conclusion the more the state encompasses many diversified groups, the more the existence of incompatible goals and interests and this makes conflict inevitable (Abeje, 2006). Accordingly, the country needs to have well-designed and functional conflict management and resolution institutions which are highly efficient and effective at all levels. In Ethiopia, conflict management, resolution and transformation are practiced in both modern (formal) and traditional (informal) institutions as described below.

### **2.1.7.1 Formal Conflict Management and Resolution Institutions**

Governments are the prime responsible bodies in the process of conflict management and resolution. Consequently, the government institutes formal institutions to discharge its responsibilities in relation to dealing conflicts of various types. In Ethiopian context, there are several modern institutions which were established to manage and resolve inter and intra-regional state conflicts, but the house of federation is the most significant and relevant constitutional organ.

The house of federation is the uppermost organ authorized with various kinds of pro-active and reactive responsibilities, especially, in relation to matters of identities and boundary issues. For example, it is responsible to find solutions to decide over misunderstandings/disputes which are created between regional states if the concerned parties fail to reach an agreement (FDRE, 1995, Art. 48 and 62 (6)), determines over matters related to the rights of nation, nationalities and peoples to self-determination, including succession (ibid, Art. 62 (3)) and it is also the principal guardian of the federal constitution (Art. 62 (9)).

The responsibilities of the house of federation also surpass solving ethnic conflicts over identity and boundary issues and thus, it is a responsible organ to promote and consolidate the unity of Ethiopian people based on their mutual consent (ibid, Art. 62 (4)). Practically speaking, however, the house of federation let alone promoting and consolidating the unity of Ethiopian people, it didn't properly resolve various identity and boundary related cases and conflicts due to political influences, financial and human resource limitations, and overloaded responsibilities as various scientific studies illustrate.

According to Feissa (2010), the Minister of Federal Affairs is also another important institution which has been involving in conflict management and resolution activities which arise from ethnic conflict and border disputes. He further described that, the ministry facilitates conflict resolution processes in two conditions. The first one is when the concerned regions become incapable of solving their conflict by themselves, and secondly, the regional states call for the intervention of the federal authority via sending the issue to the office the prime minister.

### **2.1.7.2 The Role of Indigenous Conflict Resolution Institutions in Ethiopia**

In Africa, traditional conflict management and resolution systems are closely bounded with the lifestyles of the communities which accounted social, economic and political realities

(Bukari, 2013). The traditional conflict resolution institutions have been playing a great role to solve disputes, reduce tensions and thereby, rebuild and consolidate social relations. These institutions are rooted in the histories and cultures of African people, but they are, in one or another way, unique to each society (Tarekegn, 2008).

In countries which are enriched through cultural heritages, like Ethiopia, traditional institutions play a substantial role in the process of managing and resolving conflicts in the societies. Similarly, we discuss the traditional conflict resolution institutions and the processes they follow in the study areas.

### **A. Traditional Conflict Resolution in Afar**

All the community of Afar are governed by the same tradition (Ada) regardless of their clan affiliation, residence area or national political changes. Hence, legendary customary rules and principles that were descended from the predecessors have a strong sense of respect in the heart and mind of the Afar people. If someone misbehaves or performs a breach of conduct, the reference is immediately made to these unwritten normative laws which were rooted in their culture since time immemorial. Elders are believed to possess the wisdom and knowledge which were accumulated over a long period of time and considered to be instrumental for the transfer of these customary knowledge and practices to the consecutive generations via informal education (Reda, 2011).

Afars strongly believe that all disagreements within their ethnic group should be peacefully settled in accordance with Mad'aa. It is a long standing customary law comprising of specified rules and guidelines on how to address disputes. It was rooted in Hamadu Sirat, who is mostly identified as the apical ancestor and father of all Afar clans. In this system, offence against other clans of the Afar community is commonly resolved through giving compensation to the victims both in cash and livestock (ibid).

As cited in Toyib, Balew and Samara (2019), Jamaluddin (1973:2-4) described that five different sorts of crimes are identified in Ma'ada customary law. These are Dafu (insults, affronts), Rado (theft, property destruction), Samo (adultery), Aymissiya (injury) and Eido (killings). According to this law, the amount of compensation given to the victims is determined by the type of an offence and its context (Tafere, 2011). In Ma'ada system, the clan is held responsible for the misconducts of its members, and thus, the notion of collective responsibility is mainly the defining features of Mad'aa. Accordingly, the livestock or money

to be paid in the form of compensation is shared by all clan members irrespective of their place of residence (ibid). However, this way of paying compensation is one among the challenges in discouraging misconducts and realizing peace and order in the study area (it is broadly discussed in chapter five).

### **B. Traditional Conflict Resolution in Bati-Oromos**

The most familiar institution of administration and home-grown conflict resolution mechanism among the Oromo people is the Gada system. Gada refers to a system of class called Luba that succeeds each other every eight years in the process of assuming ritual, economic, military and responsibilities. In the Gada system, there are mechanisms to prevent violent conflicts and to resolve it if they occur (Feissaa, 2011). Currently, however, the system of Gada is not fully practical in Wollo-Oromos, particularly, Bati-Oromos, and there, conflict cases are solved by a traditional conflict resolution mechanism called the ‘Abbagaar system’. The institution of ‘Abbaagaar’ helps to manage disputes between or among individuals or groups in Bati-Oromos. It helps to handle both civil and criminal cases ((Bati Woreda Culture and Tourism, 2002; BWK-4, Bati 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2021).

The word "Abbaagar" refers to people who have a special talent to contain and calm the conflict before it is changed into blood shedding violence. Literally, ‘Abba’ means owner, and ‘Garii’ means good. In general, "Abbaaggar" means good, good owner. Abegar, on the other hand, is a respected person who plays a lot in the process of conflict reconciliation and resolution. Rejection of the requests of Abbagaars in the community is seen as a violation of the culture, and those who do not accept the decision are feared to be ostracized by the community (Bati Woreda Culture and Tourism, 2002; BWK-5, Bati 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2021).

However, Abbagars are not directly involved in conflict resolution process; rather they, first of all, calm the conflict between parties, advice conflict parties to come into the resolution process using their tradition and, opening and closing the conflict resolution process through blessing. After Abbagaars confirmed that the conflict parties are willing to solve the conflict via traditional method (Abbagaar System), a collection local elder (Shimagilewoch) receive the case from Abagars (BWK-4 and BWK-5 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2021)).

Then, the local elders hear the case of the contending parties carefully, and decide kind of punishments and compensations that are going to be applied to avert the conflict. Then after, if the conflict parties agree with the recommended decision of local elders, the Abbagaars are

called to come and hear the final decisions reached. Finally, Abbagaars bless all conflict parties and give an oath not to be going into further conflict with each other (Ibid).

### **2.1.7.3 Responsible Factors for the Failure of Conflict Resolution Efforts**

In several occasions, conflict resolution attempts fail due to various contributing factors. The first one is that since there are no military conflicts at this level, government and organizations work little or nothing with conflict prevention. Conflict prevention includes both direct and Structural preventions. While direct prevention refers to measures to be taken to prevent short-term, largely imminent, escalation of a potential conflict, structural prevention emphasizes on more long term plans and actions that address the core causes of a potential conflict. However, the problem is that “the old saying why fix it when it is not broken becomes a sad reality, [and] this is the same as saying why buy insurance if you are not sick. The simple answer is that when you need the insurance, it is too late to get it” (Niklas and Mikael, 2005: 27).

Indeed, it may not be possible to avoid all potential conflicts through early conflict prevention efforts; but it is an attainable assignment to decrease the magnitude and numbers of conflicts that will be escalated to a destructive war, thereby saving economic resources and averting human suffering. The above authors also argue that states and international organizations become more concerned about the concept of conflict prevention over time. They have been gradually moving towards underlining the role of pro-active and structural measures, particularly in their developmental policies, in preventing conflicts though the implementation process is still a problematic.

### **2.1.8 Developing Conceptual Framework of the Study**

As has been stated in previous sections, conflict is an integral part of human lives which couldn't be avoided. According to Brown (1993), ethnic conflict is one type of conflict in which two or more ethnic groups fighting against one another for important economic, political, cultural, or territorial issues. According to Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) (2006) and Engel & Korf (2005), the causes of ethnic conflicts are those contributing factors that played a great role for the eruption of conflict and could be classified as root (structural) and trigger factors.

Accordingly, ethnic conflict can be happened due to economic, political, socio-cultural as well as security related factors. In ethnically diverse societies, including Africa, inter-ethnic

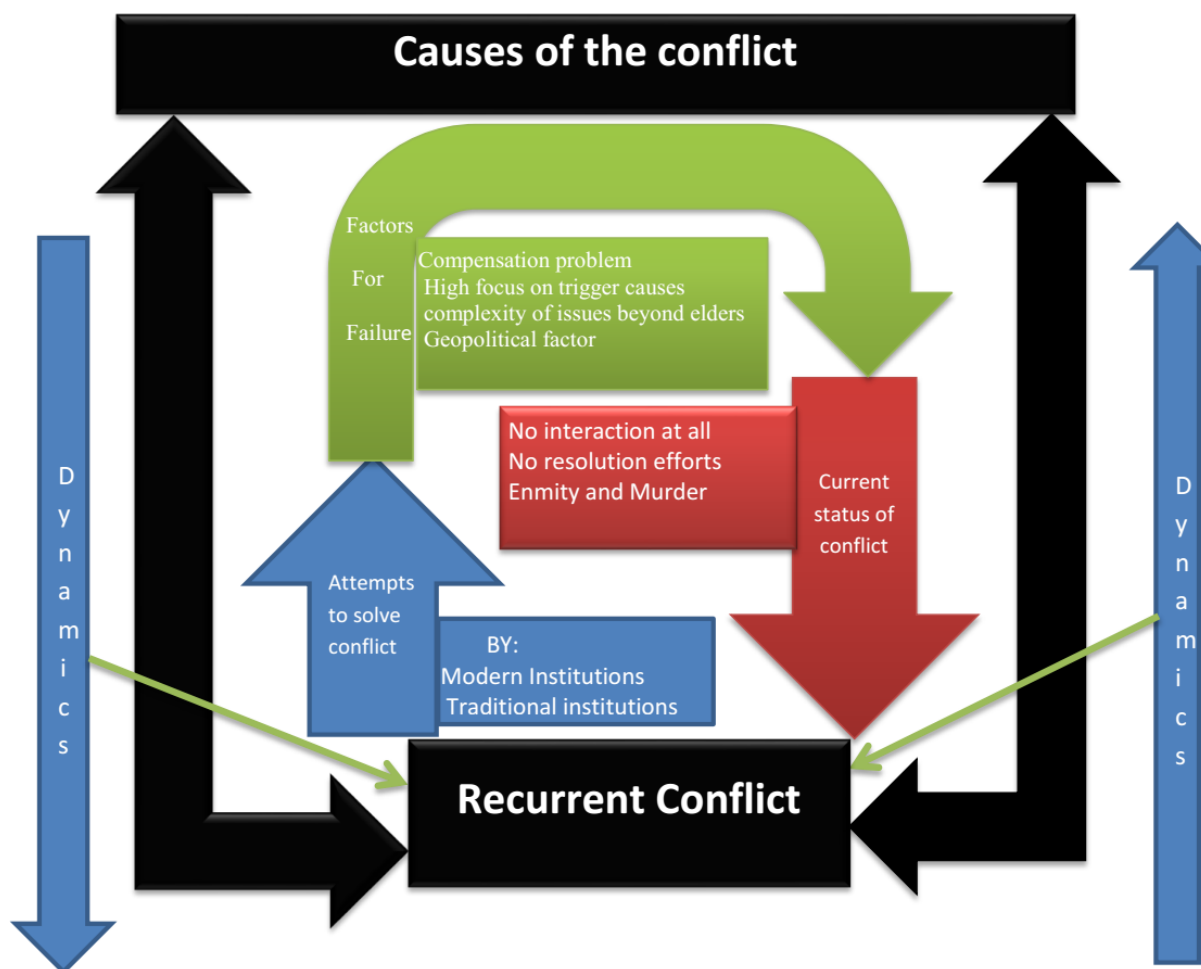
conflict is not occurred as the result of a single factor, but by multiple causes. Correspondingly, ethnic conflicts, in Ethiopia, are triggered by numerous factors like historical factors, ethnic based federalism and politics, highly politicized ethnicity, competition for scarce resources, lack of fair social and economic opportunities, bad governance, lack of security and political participation (Sisay, 2007).

In related to sustained conflict, conflict dynamics, refers to the interaction between the conflict profile, actors and cause of the conflict in the conflict life cycle (Department for International Development (DFID), 2002). In general, the dynamics of ethnic conflict is described as conflict escalating and de-escalating factors and the windows of opportunity to solve the conflict.

In the process of developing the conceptual framework of the study, the most important task next to describing the key concepts is that clearly analysing how these key concepts in the framework interacts with each other. Accordingly, as we can see from figure 1 below, the root and triggering causes of the conflict lead to recurrent conflicts and these recurrent conflicts produce other causes of the conflict once more. To get out of this awful cycle of the conflict, there were various attempts tried by modern and traditional conflict resolution institutions; but those attempts remained unsuccessful to bring its intended objectives due to socio-cultural, political and geopolitical factors.

The failure of these efforts led to the current/ existing status of the conflict which is characterized by mutual suspicion, murder and hostility between the conflicting parties. Simultaneously, the current status of the conflict directly leads to recurrent conflict once again; and finally, there were various dynamics which escalated and de-escalated the conflict between the two ethnic groups. All what we stated have been summarized in the following figure.

**Figure 1: Conceptual Frame Work of Bati Oromo and Telalak Afar Inter Ethnic Conflict**



Source: The Researcher’s Analysis

## 2.2 Theories of Conflict

Theories of conflict are the explanations put forward to explain causes of conflict. The causes of conflict are numerous and complex and overlapping, and this creates problem in analysing a specific conflict situation. Nevertheless, theorizing conflicts was originated in the work of Karl Marx, who focused on the causes and consequences of class conflict between the bourgeoisie (the owners of the means of production and the capitalists) and the proletariat (the working class and the poor). Thus, Marxists maintain that conflict occurs because of the exploitative and unjust nature of human societies or because of domination of one class by another class (Folarin, 2011).

Though Marx was the pioneer in theorizing conflict, scholars advanced different theories aimed at understanding the structural causes of a conflict from various perspectives. Accordingly, the researcher deemed that the following theories play a paramount role in understanding and analysing the nature and dynamics of Bati-Oromo and Telalak Afar inter-ethnic conflict since.

### **2.2.1 Realist Theory of Conflict**

Realism is a school of thought which mainly emphasizes on the competitive and dark side of human beings. It views conflict as a product of the innately selfish nature of man, who continues to pursue his own best interests even at the expense of others. This selfish nature of man leads to “competitive processes” between or among actors who seek to have all or most of available scarce resources (McGlinchey, Walters, & Scheinpflug, 2017).

It is such attribute that is taken to the inter-state level, which leads to erratic behavior, hegemonic propensities and imperialism that can impel resistance as well as violent opposition and consequently heat up the international system (Folarin, 2011). Indeed, realists have been criticized that they deny the existence of morality and ethical values of human being in state and they are also too pessimistic about human nature since they focus on its dark side alone.

However, it is apparent that their thoughts still highly manifest the realities of local, national and international politics. They strongly believe that everything what political actors do mainly aims at maximizing their political advantages as human beings are lust for power and interest maximizers. Though it is not always true, the researcher strongly argue that realism theory of conflict intensely resembles with the case of Bati-Oromo and Telalak Afar inter-ethnic conflict. It is because, as the data obtained from various respondents, some political elites/entrepreneurs are the main ‘conflict brewer’ in the study area.

They have been continuing to be not only one of the root causes of the conflict but also the main spoiler of the resolution process. This has not been happened not because of the people of the two ethnic groups at the grass-roots level, but due to political entrepreneurs of both sides who are not satisfied by their political, social and other positions. They make the peoples at the grass-roots level and prepare them for violent conflicts against each other.

### **2.2.2 Economic Theory of Conflict**

Economic theory of conflict explicates the economic suggestions in conflict causation. There is considerable interface between politics (power, resources or value) and scarcity. People seek power because it is a means to an end, more often, economic ends. Communities feud over farmlands, grazing fields, water resource, etc, and groups fight with government over allocation of resources or revenue. Scarcity, wants, needs, or the fear of scarcity is often a driving force for political power, contention for resource control, and so forth (Folarin, 2011).

These factors largely happen due to intertwined dynamics like population pressure, poverty, environmental degradation and mismanagement of local resources. Hence, as Ayalew (2009), in the upper -Awash valley, the inter-communal clashes are associated with scarcity of pastoral resources and the decline of environmental space. Likewise, in the study areas, agro-pastoralist Bati Oromos and pastoralist Telalak Afars compete over scarce grazing and farm lands. This also led them into recurrent clash which caused bloodshed conflict in recent years.

Conflict is thus plausible in the course of such a tangible fear or threat of scarcity. Just as the fear of poverty and deprivation could lead to fraud or corruption; so is threat of or real famine, deprivation, mismanagement of scarce resources could drive conflict over resource control (ibid). Hence, as territorial claim and expansion of farm lands is one root cause of the conflict in the study area, the argument of economic theorists, fears and concerns associated economic resources are prominent causes of inter-group and inter-communal conflict, strongly converges with the existing study.

### **2.3 Review of Empirical Literatures**

In the post-1991 period, ethnic conflicts have been continuing to be acute challenges to Ethiopia's peace and development. So as to examine the profiles, root causes, actors, impacts and conflict resolution efforts of such conflicts and indicate scholarly solutions, a number of researches were conducted. Daniel (2015) on the inter-ethnic conflict between Hadiya and Halaba; Golelcha (2015) on Ethnic conflict and its management in Pastoralist Communities of Guji and Borana; Ruth (2017) on the emerging conflicts and quest for sustainable peace building in West Guji Zone of Southern; Yidneckachew (2012) on ethnic conflict management and transformation of Derashe and Konso; Amare (2013) on the inter-ethnic conflict transformation in Benishangul Gumuz Regional State of Asossa Woreda; Atre (2018) examined the Inter-ethnic border conflict between Guji Oromo and Burji.

However, all most all of the above studies were conducted in the southern part of the country as the region encompasses many ethnic groups and is exposed to frequent intra and inter-ethnic conflicts. And thus, they paid little attention to the inter-ethnic conflict of Bati Oromo and Telalak Afar despite the conflict remained persistent and serious. There are some researches which were conducted vis-a-vis the conflict between Afars and their neighbors.

For instance, Bekele (2010) investigated causes of Afar and Karraye Oromo conflicts and concluded that the gradual decline of the pastoral resource bases and land confiscation by the state are among the serious challenges of Afars in Awash-Fentale since the 1960s. Muaz (2009) on his part studied the conflict of Afar with Issa since 1991. The study focused on structural, cultural, relational and contextual features of Issa-Afar conflict in a historical continuum and how the conflict can be resolved and transformed.

Furthermore, a historical survey of Issã-Afar conflict from 1936 to 1994 also conducted by Biniyam (2016). According to this research, the root causes of the conflict are related to economic and political marginalization of Issã and Afar by the successive regimes, culturally factors, administrative penetration and expropriation of pastoralists and their resource for huge non-pastoralist system and competition over the scarce resources.

Moreover, Yasin (2010) has also done dissertation entitled on regional dynamics of inter-ethnic conflicts in the Horn of Africa: an analysis of the Afar-Somali conflict in Ethiopia and Djibouti. He analyzed major events in the politics of the region that trigger an escalation of the Afar and Issa/Somali conflict and, specifically overall background of physical and economical settings as well as socio-political organizations of the Afar and Issa/Somali people. The above three researches were limited on the conflict between Afar and their neighbor Issa people. Hence, they are neither historically nor geographically related with the conflict between Telalak Afar and Bati Oromo ethnic groups.

Furthermore, Abraha Tehay (2012) conducted a research on the dynamics of inter-communal conflict in North East Ethiopia, the case of Wejerat people and their neighboring Afar which gave more emphasis for the causes, actors and their interest, effects of the conflict and peace intervention. Another study entitled the practice of inter-ethnic conflict transformation in Ethiopia: The case of Amhara-Afar conflict in Kewot in N/Shoawa and Semurobi Gela Alo Woredain in Hari Rasu Zone was also done by Anteneh Alemu (2013). However, these studies concentrated more on the causes; actors, changes and continuities, transforming the conflict and its challenge even though situations are changed from time to time and place to

place too. As a result, they did not see the dynamics of the conflict and current condition of the conflict even in the study areas they studied.

More specifically, nearest to this paper, some researches were done. For instance, Mohamed (2018) has done research on investigating the dynamics of inter-ethnic conflict and transforming mechanisms as well as possible remedies tried out in resolving the conflict between Chifra Pastoralists of Afar and Bati Oromo communities. However, his research focused merely on the causes, the frequency and intensity of the conflict, and its impacts. Other paper entitled on the inter-ethnic conflict between Bati Oromo and Ada'ar Afar, which focused of the profile, causes, actors and impact of the conflict, was done by Abdulaziz (2020).

The result of those studies indicated that economic factors, especially, territorial claim is a root cause of the conflict in contrary to the findings of the current study, which identified political factors as fundamental causes of the conflict, between Telalak Afar and Bati-Oromo ethnic groups, and territorial claim as a by-product of political factors. Proliferation of small arms and light weapons, cattle raiding and charcoal production were triggering factors for the recurrent conflict between the ethnic groups

Nevertheless, they did not discover the local, national and international dynamics to escalate and deescalate the conflict (especially after the 2018 political change), the current status of the conflict, and why the resolution attempts failed to bring about the intended objectives. In order to fill these gaps, conducting an empirical study which assesses all these untouched issues became very essential. As a result, the researcher decided to do a research entitled with 'analyzing the nature and dynamics of inter-ethnic conflicts in Federal Ethiopia: the case of Bati Oromo and Telalak Afar ethnic groups since 1991', and thus, the findings of this paper are greatly varied from the previous ones.

First of all, this study revealed that political factors were the main driving force for the violent conflict between Telalak Afar and Bati-Oromo ethnic groups. Moreover, the past efforts to mitigate the conflict and build lasting peace became futile due to high involvement of political elites in the conflict resolution process and the incapacitation of local elders, the complexity of the issue beyond the realm of traditional methods, geo-political significance of Afar for proliferation weapons, problems on methods of conflict resolution (the traditional way of compensation), lack of early warning and preventive mechanisms and high focus on triggering factors instead of the root causes during resolution process.

Regarding with the triggering factors, the finding of the study on the conflict between Bati Oromo and Telalak Afar supported the findings of the aforesaid researchers. However, it is important to underscore that rivalry over scarce resources (what previous studies took as a root cause) was not the underline cause of the conflict to this study. As informants, there are very vast land resources with a huge potential to benefit not only Afars and Wollo-Oromos but also beyond them; but, the growing of political conspiracy and greedy political elites who have been using ethnicity as an instrument to commence and escalate ethnic conflict remained at the heart of the conflict in the study area and continued to be the main challenges to mitigate it.

## CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3. Introduction

This portion deals with the research methodology that laid down the foundation to the whole process by which the research was accomplished. Hence, it outlines research approach and design, sample size, sampling technique, source of data, tools of data collection and methods of data interpretation and analysis.

#### 3.1. Description of the Study Area and

This research was conducted on the inter-ethnic conflict between Bati Oromo and Telalak Afar. Bati is a Woreda in North Central Ethiopia which is located in the Oromia Zone of Amhara Regional State of Ethiopia and in the northeast of Addis Ababa with a distance of 420kms from Addis. It is neighbored in the South East by the Argoba Special Woreda, in the south by Dawa Harewa, in the west and north by the South Wello Zone, and in the East by the Afar Region. The administrative center of Bati Woreda is Bati Town. It is said to have been established around 1872 E.C.

According to Briggs (2002), Bati was an important crossroad for the Amhara, Oromia Zone and semi-nomadic, desert-dwelling Afar people. Bati is known for its Monday market which more than tens of thousands of people attend. According to the 2007 Census conducted by the Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia (CSA), Bati Woreda had a total population of 107,387. Of this, 53,731 were men and the remaining 53,656 were women. Of this population, the majority (96.06 %) followed Islam. The remaining population (2.99% and 0.95%) followed Orthodox Christianity, and Protestantism and others respectively.

Telalak Woreda, on the other hand, is belonging to Hari Rasu (Zone 5) of the Afar Region of Ethiopia. The District is bordered by Dewe in the south, Amhara Region in the West, Awusi Rasu Zone of Afar Region in the North and Gabi Rasu Zone of Afar Region in the East. Telalak Woreda has a total population of 37,970 (22,395 men and 15,575 women), according to the sources obtained from Telalak Woreda Administration. According to the District's Pastoral, Agriculture and Rural Development Office, the number of livestock in the District, in 2009, was estimated to be 521,200 (Telalak Woreda Pastoral, Agriculture and Rural Development Office, 2009). While Telalak Afars are largely pastoralists, Bati Oromos are agro-pastoralists for their livelihood.

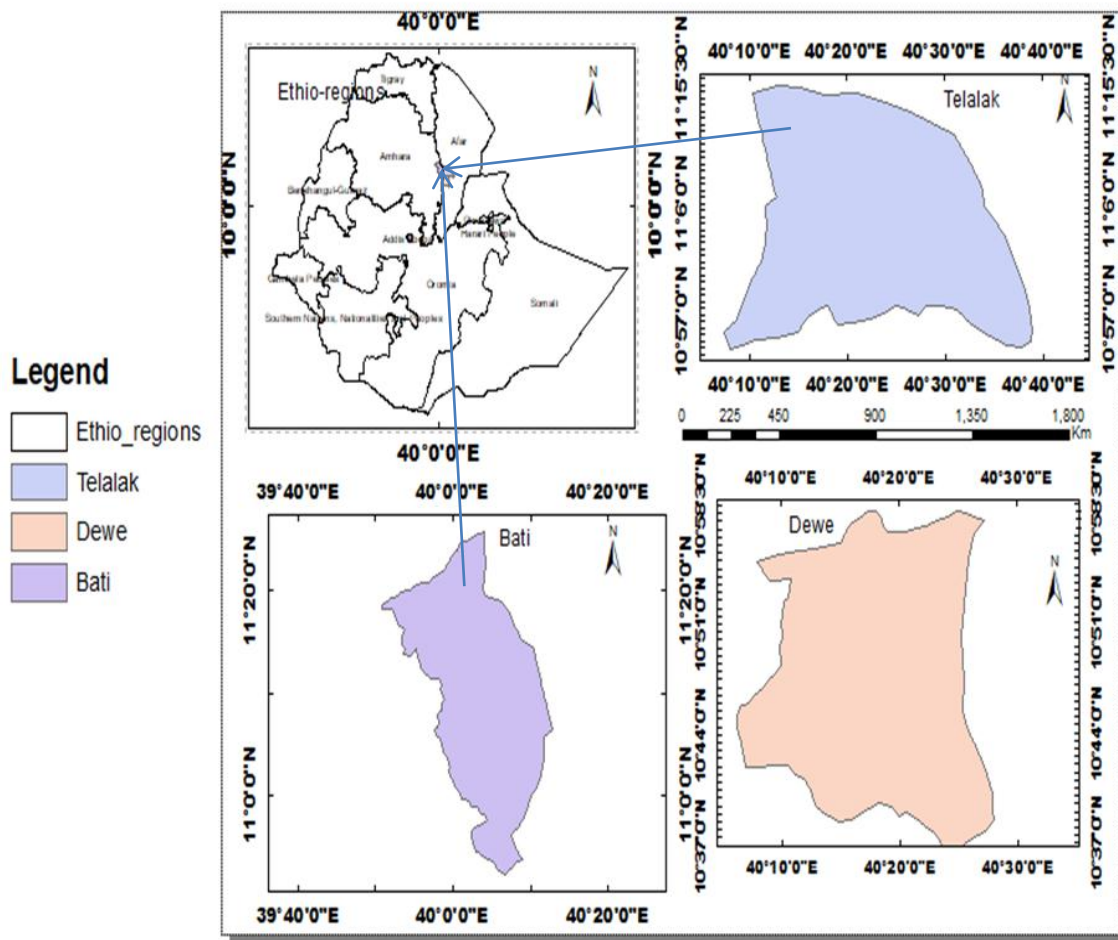


Figure 2: The location and the intersection areas of the conflict parties in the study areas

### 3.2 Research Approach

Given the nature of the objectives of the study, qualitative research approach was employed. As Dawson (2002) clearly stated, qualitative research approach helps to investigate attitudes and experiences using methods like interviews or focus group discussions. Creswell (2009) also argues that this approach adds flexibility to incorporate wider discussions in the study at hand. In addition, qualitative approach helps to address research questions that require explanation or understanding of social phenomena and their contexts in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Hence, the reason behind using qualitative approach in this study is that it helps to explore topics of interest that are subjective in nature which is originated from attitudes, experiences and understandings of participants.

### **3.3 Research Type and Design**

Due to the nature of its objectives, the study adopted both exploratory and descriptive research type in nature. While the focus of exploratory research is to discover new findings on which little or no previous research has been conducted (Brown, 2006; Kothari & Garg, 2014), a descriptive study is employed to explore the issue under study through variety of sources. Hence, descriptive study permits the researcher to incorporate participants' actual expression of matters from their own perspective by their own words. Hence, descriptive research helps to describe/narrate a given state of affair as it is.

The research design that has been adopted in this paper was a case study one. Case study design, in qualitative research, helps to explore processes, activities, and events in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of the research problem at hand using different data gathering instruments (Creswell, 2014). Hence; given the focus area of the study which concentrated mainly on the causes, consequences, conflict resolution mechanisms and the current trends of conflict between Bati Oromo and Telalak Afar ethnic groups, case study research design was appropriate for the reason of exploring possible explanations and analysis.

### **3.4. Sources of Data**

In this research, most of the data were gathered from the study area through intensive filed study using primary sources like local leaders and elders, religious leaders, victim individuals and some government officials. As a secondary data, the researcher tried to access available literature such as conflict situation official reports, thesis and dissertations, journal articles, books which were related to the objectives of the study. While primary sources were vital to obtain first-hand knowledge for the study, secondary sources were indispensable to lay methodological, conceptual, theoretical and empirical underpinnings and supplement the primary data.

### **3.5 Methods of Data Collection**

In order to address the objectives of this study, the researcher employed various types of interviews as data gathering instruments while he was collecting data from the study area. Accordingly, the researcher conducted a semi-structured interview due to its appropriateness to overcome the limitations of both structured and non-structured interviews. Unlike a structured interview, a semi-structured interview helps to get detailed information about the

issue under investigation, and in contrary to non-structured one, it minimizes the complexity of data analysis process and missing of important points. In doing so, the researcher conducted an in-depth interview, a key informant interview, a focus group discussion and a document analysis.

### **3.5.1 In-depth Interview**

An in-depth interview is a repeated face-to-face encounter between the researcher and informants directed towards understanding the informants' perspectives on their experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words (Kumar, 2005). In this study, the researcher conducted a semi-structured interview due to its appropriateness to overcome the limitations of both structured and non-structured interviews. This means, unlike a structured interview, a semi-structured interview helps to get detailed information about the issue under investigation and in contrary to non-structured one. It also minimizes the complexity of data analysis process and the missing of important points. Accordingly, in-depth interviews were conducted on 18 community members (10 from Bati and 8 from Telalak) who live in the conflict area until the researcher reached the data saturation point.

### **3.5.2 Key Informant Interview (KII)**

In this study, 18 individuals from different sections of the society in the two ethnic communities were selected as key informant interviewees. These included 2 police officers (1 from each), 2 woreda security officers (1 from each), 2 woreda administrators (1 from each), 2 conflict protection and resolution officers (1 from each), 4 victims (2 from each), and 4 conciliator local leaders/elders (2 from each) and 2 religious leaders (1 from each). Many of these individuals are expected to have long experiences and participation in forums held to settle conflicts as well as to show knowledge of communities' values and practices.

In conducting KII, the researcher tried to balance ethnic composition from both Telalak and Bati. The researcher conducted a semi-structured interview on these selected key informants from different community members by taking their proximity in terms of knowledge and position to the subject under investigation into consideration. All in all, the researcher employed key informant interviews for the purpose of three factors. Firstly, it helps to cross check the data obtained from an in-depth interview; secondly, since it contains various segments of the society, it assists data diversification and generates new insights; and thirdly, to access data that couldn't be obtained through normal in-depth interviews.

### **3.5.3 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)**

Focus group discussion is used to explore the perceptions, experiences, and understanding of a group of people who have some experience in common with regard to a situation or an event (Kumar, 2005). For triangulating data which were obtained from an in-depth interview and key informants, two FGD sessions were carried out within both ethnic groups. One FGD team was in Telalak and other FGD team in Bati ethnic/community members. Each group was composed of six members. The participants of the FGD were selected based on their willingness and ethnic background since the issue was sensitive. During the FGDs, checklists of semi-structured questions were used. Field assistants were instrumental during data collection process that was accomplished through in-depth interviews, key informant interviews and FGD.

### **3.5.4 Document Analysis**

In conducting this study (from its inception to finalization), various types of documents were used. Document analysis based on published and unpublished documents was also another way of data collection so as to supplement data triangulation and diversification, and this helped to enrich the findings of the study.

## **3.6. Sampling Technique and Sampling Size**

Since the study was qualitative, the sampling technique applied in this study was purposive sampling. Hence, the selection of key informants from various segments of the two communities, in-depth interview participants from the community members who live at the border (highly affected and innermost kebeles like Abaroo, Kesem Gadi and Gawas on the part of Telalak; and Damatoo, Chefii and Abilaloo on the Bati side) of the two woredas and FGD participants was made based on purposive sampling technique. Accordingly, the researcher intentionally selected the aforementioned respondents with the primary consideration of their ethnic group, knowledge and position in the two ethnic groups.

According to Kumar (2005), the primary consideration in purposive sampling is the judgment of the researcher as to who can provide the best information to achieve the objectives of the research. It is extremely useful to construct a historical reality, describe a phenomenon or develop something about which only little is known. What is more, snowball-sampling technique was applied to collect the required data from victims of such a conflict.

As far as the sample size is concerned, most scholars like Kumar (2005) agree that qualitative research does not attempt to either quantify or determine the sample size. Therefore, in qualitative research, to explore the diversity, a researcher needs to reach what is known as a saturation point in terms of the finding investigated. Data saturation involves bringing new participants continually into the data set until the researcher reaches the point of diminishing returns where nothing new is being added (Marshall et al, 2013).

Accordingly, a total of 48 respondents (25 from Bati and 23 from Afar) were involved in the study from both ethnic groups by using field assistants. While the researcher was collecting data, field assistants were instrumental. Field assistants are not data collection methods/instruments, especially, to create trust among the researcher and study. Therefore, two field assistants (one from each ethnic group) were selected based on their willingness, ability to speak the local language and their familiarity and proximity to the researcher.

### **3.7 Method of Data Analysis and Interpretation**

The process of data analysis in this study was accomplished by using qualitative method of data analysis, particularly a thematic analysis. While doing the analysis process, the researcher firstly made data reduction in order to filter out the vital and concrete data among the bulks of the collected information. Secondly, the researcher categorized and put data into themes – the data with regards, causes, the interventions taken to solve and transform the conflict and the current trends and the opportunities to be used to attain sustainable peace in the study area. This helped to make data interpretation and analysis process easier and simple.

Thirdly, the researcher made interpretation and analysis so as to put the thematically categorized data in the form of statements and arguments in a logical, objective and reliable ways. Moreover, to make the process of data interpretation and analysis clear and easily understandable, the researcher employed conflict analysis tools in the respective places. Finally, based on the analysed data, the researcher made possible conclusions and recommendations. Accordingly, the following three chapters deal with the presentation of data analysis, discussion of results and interpretation of data collected through in-depth interviews, key informant interview, focus group discussion as well as document analysis.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. The Causes of an Inter-Ethnic Conflict between Bati Oromos and Afars

Conflict is a very complex social process which is interacted by a number of intercepted causes that contribute to conflict in one way or the other (kenaw, 2013). According to the data obtained from informants, the natures of the causes of the conflict are basically political and economic. But, these causes are multifarious, complex and interwoven with each other. The causes of the conflict, in the study area, cannot be reduced to a single factor. The study classified these causes into structural (root) and proximate or triggering causes. Accordingly, this chapter is devoted to deeply analyse these causes.

#### 4.1 The Root Causes of the Conflict

“Root causes of conflict are underlying socio-economic, cultural and institutional factors which create conditions for destructive conflict and violence” (UNICEF Guide to Conflict Analysis, 2006: 20). They are elements which exist in a given society and institutions that have the potential to motivate violent conflicts. Such causes are long existing antecedents in a society and were not formally resolved in a social process (ibid). Therefore, based on the data gathered from the respondents, the root/structural causes for the conflict of the two ethnic groups are two interrelated causes, namely political (political elites’ greediness and poor boundary demarcation) and economic factors (territorial claim and new settlement foundation and expansion vis-à-vis the change in life style of pastoralists.

##### 4.1.1 Political Factors

###### 4.1.1.1 *Ethnic Federalism: A source of conflict in its own or a Means to an End*

As per the data obtained from both primary and secondary sources, before the introduction of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia, both Wollo Oromos and Afars were used to live in one (Wollo) administration [Wollo Teklay Gizat] in AWSA Awuraja. However, the new ethnic based federal arrangement and territorial restructuring inaugurated by the regime of EPRDF detached the Wollo province in to different national regional states, Zones, special Zone and special Woredas. As a result, the Wollo Oromos received a special Zone status under the Amhara national Regional State, and Afar became one of the nine National regional states which made the Ethiopian federal make up during the then time.

The FGD participants from both ethnic groups highlighted that conflicts between Afar and Wollo Oromos were occurred for centuries and are not new phenomena indeed; but these age

old conflicts were due to competitions over grazing lands and water resources, and were not beyond the realm of local elders and traditional conflict management mechanisms. Even there was no feeling of we and they; there were various economic, social and cultural bonds which tied us together (TWFGDM, 26<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Telalak; BWFGDM, 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati).

However, since the introduction of ethnic federal system, the conflicts of the two people became substantially different from the earlier ones in terms of its intensity, frequency, actors, causes and the effects of the conflict in the two communities. It radically contradicts the undisputable truth of history of the occasional clashes created between the two ethnic groups (Ibid). Hence, arm based violent conflicts and feelings of ethnic hostilities among the members of Wollo Oromos and Afars begun to be seeded since 1991.

As Melaku (2019:71) cited, Brian J. Yate described the reality of Wollo (particularly, before 1991) as follow. “Wollo is an Amhara, Oromo... Muslim and Christian altogether . . . While Ethiopia is diversity in diversity, Wollo is diversity in Unity.” Hence, it is to mean that Wollo was a centre of various forms of diversities, but a place where ethnic and religious boundaries were not as such big deals. Muslims and Christians, the Oromo, the Amhara, the Agew, the Afar and the Argoba had been living together with a spirit of equality, peace and cooperation long before 1991’ (BWFGDM, 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati). Hence, if there was a real interest to build an effective federal system, on the part of EPRDF, Wollo would be the best model to other regions in steady of being dismantled in to different ethnic and geographical administrations.

A government official from Bati expresses his ill-filling about the division of Wollo in to different political administrations, after the introduction ethnic federalism, via remembering the battle of Segele in 1916 that led to the captivity of the king of Wollo, Nigus Mikael (the father of Lij Eyyasu). He stated that, at Segele, the king of Wollo lost the battle and the political autonomy of Wollo came to an end. As a result, the people of wollo expressed its ill-feeling through popular verses as follow.

ራሴን ወገ ሴን ብሎ ሳይናገር	Rasen Wegeben belo sayinagger
ጭቶ ተቀበረ ወለግን ያህል አገር	Moto teqebbere Wollon yahil Ager

Without telling his sickness  
Wollo, a large empire, died and was buried

However, he strongly claims that, at the Battle of Segele, Wollo lost its leader and its political autonomy indeed, but in the post-1991 period, we lost everything: our territorial integrity, our history, our love, our social and moral values. Now, historical values of mutual trust and respect across ethnicities and religions are getting deteriorated and worsened. He word by word said that “ወሎ እወኔ ተኛ ሞት የ ሞተ.ከ 1984 ወደህ ነ ወ:” ‘Wollo ewunetegna mot yemotew ke 1984 wedih new.’ Its literal meaning is that it is after 1984 (E.C) that Wollo died the real death. Our timeless golden traditions are being replaced by murder and hatred. All these fatalities are a result of political conspiracy of leaders. Ethnicity is being used as an instrument to realize the goals of egoist politicians. I strongly believe that our [Bati-Oromos and Afars] conflict is also the result those greedy politicians who are lust for power and benefit (BWI-2, 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati).

Therefore, nevertheless, in the post-1991 Ethiopia, the dynamics and nature of the Afar and Wollo Oromos conflicts became fundamentally changed; and one of the central causes for such a negative change is the restructuring of Ethiopian state in to ethno-national federalism. However, the main point that has to be underlined and the researcher wanted to show is that the proliferation and intensification of conflicts under the study area and other parts of the country became more visible in the post-1991 period. Many scholars attribute such ethnic conflicts to the structure of ethnic federalism itself, and still others relate them with defects of implementation.

In relation to the above arguments, Lubo (2012) argued that the contemporary inter and intra-ethnic conflicts in the post-1991 federal Ethiopia could be considered as ethno-nationalist conflicts that have been emerged due to ethnic federalism, and it is a conflict over land and water resources. Likewise, Abbink (2006) argued that federalism was partly introduced, by EPRDF, with the aim of addressing multinational ethnic issues; yet, it seems to be at the centre/ root cause/ of ethnic conflicts in many parts of the country, especially conflicts related to land ownership and livestock raiding in different administrative borders.

The above two writers unavoidably revealed the fundamental structural problems of ethnic federalism. On the other hand, some researchers associated the post-1991 inter-ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia with self-centred politicians, not with the very nature of ethnic federalism. For instance, Demissew (2016) argues that non-satisfied political entrepreneurs initiate and prepare people at the grass-roots level for violent conflicts against each other.

They have been continuing to be not only one of the root causes of the conflict, in the post 1991 period, but also the main spoiler of the resolution process (Abdulaziz, 2019).

All in all, based on all forms of data obtained from both primary and secondary sources, this study makes political factors related to ethnic federalism at the heart of Afar-Oromo inter-ethnic conflicts in the study area. The researcher tried to highlight three basic hypotheses to arrive at this conclusion. The first hypothesis is the worst of all as it is a combination of *structural and implementation* problems i.e. ethnic federalism is structurally conflict instigator and political entrepreneurs also used ethnicity as a means to achieve their ends. The second hypothesis is that ethnic conflict in the study area is mainly associated with the very nature of ethnic federalism (*structural problem*) regardless of its implementation.

The third hypothesis is that inter-ethnic conflict in the study area is associated with the connotation given to ethnic federalism (i.e. misconception) or the deliberate tendency of politicians to use ethnic federalism and ethnicity as a means to an end. It is relatively the least worst since it is clearly *an implementation problem* as. It can be corrected through devoid of both incompetent and selfish politicians. Nevertheless, though the question does ethnic federalism by its own promotes ethnic conflict or not has been continuing to be a centre of argument among scholars and politicians, the undeniable fact is that all the above given hypotheses are purely political which need either a structural or a leadership change or a combination of the two. Therefore, political factor is one of the root causes of Bati-Oromo and Afar ethnic conflict in the study area.

#### **4.1.1.2 The Issue of Boundary Demarcation**

Poor boundary demarcation also contributed for the intensification of ethnic conflicts. As Bati Oromo key informants argued, after some Kebeles like Kesem Gadii and Abilaloo given to Afars, the issue of border demarcation became a new critical agenda between the two ethnic groups. Thus, there was a feeling by both communities that a dispute was inevitable unless a clear demarcation is not made to separate Oromo and Afar districts (BWK-3, 14<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati).

As per the informants, the question of land ownership, for the first time, begot a serious conflict in 2016. Though the two ethnic groups were separated in different regional governments and Zones, the borderline between Bati and Afar is not evidently defined yet. For instance, some border people of Afar claim that their territory extends to Damatoo, Chefii

and Abilaloo (Kebeles which are under Bati Woreda Administration now) and present a verification that they were born in these places (TWI-1 and TWI-2, 22nd March, 2021; TWI-7, 29th March, 2021). One key informant from Afar, on the other hand, argues that in previous times, even though we [Afar] knew our real territory, we did not bother about that territory since we had always travelled to the place where we would get pasture and water.

However, when the pasture became deteriorated, we claimed our real boundary for the purpose of cultivation which would enable us to survive. Lack of due attention from us to ask our fathers' land for a long period of time created a favourable environment for Bati Oromos to present territorial claim insistently. Put bluntly, we Afars were the owner of the land. For instance, I was born at Abilaloo kebele (now under Bati wereda) and still remember the place I used to live with my parents (TWFGDM, 26th March, 2021, Telalak).

In relation to this, Kipkemoi (2015) argues that the major causes of conflicts between different ethnic groups in Ethiopia are disputes over political administration, inappropriate, unclear and confusing borderland limitations (between regions or Zones) and competition over resource. Hence, lack of political commitment to demarcate a clear cut boundary is one root cause of conflict. As ethnic federalism gives a certain territory to a given ethnic group, territorial claim is inevitable. It once again needs a wise and committed political leadership.

#### **4.1.2 Economic Factors: New Settlement Foundation to Survive**

As described earlier in the previous chapter, Bati Oromo lead their economic activities and earn their means for living from agriculture and livestock rearing. However, Telalak Afar people's livelihood relies frequently on a pastoral way of life which is characterized by mobility from one place to another in time of scarcity of resources. So as to minimize the degree of such a movement and improve the livelihood of pastoralists, the regional government of Afar designed a policy which intended to change pastoralists in to semi-pastoralists accompanied by new settlement formation and villagization at river banks in the territory of the region (BWK-1, 25<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati,)

In relation to this, an interviewee from Bati stated that since ancient times, Afar pastoralists moved from place to place in searching for pasture and water for their animals and children albeit the area is not belonging to them.. Some areas might be suitable for living temporally during the dry season and some others for the rainy season. However, after the past five and six years, they began to establish and expand permanent settlements on the land of Bati

Oromos so as to use the rivers for farming activities like irrigation. This created several devastating conflicts at various times (BWK-4, 8<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati). Hence, new settlement foundation and expansion remained one of the root causes of conflict between the two peoples. Another Bati Oromo local elder stated the situation as follows.

*At previous times, though conflict between Bati and Telalak rarely happened, such conflicts were not out of our capacity to solve and could not be causes to be an enemy with each other. Later on, however, Afar pastoralists started to expand their settlement area and gradually pushed deep inside our territory from time to time. This led to severe clashes that resulted in considerable destruction of economic resources and human life for the last four consecutive years. As a result, I can surely conclude that one of the underling factors for our conflict is an endless desire of Afars to expand new settlement area in the border with the intention of searching fertile area for the purpose of irrigation and farming activities (BWK-5, 8<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati).*

Similarly, Bati Woreda administrator argues that Telalak Afar has strong ambition and clear expansion policy to enlarge their settlement in order to control our fertile areas since their land is now less hospitable to their livestock and farming. They established several new settlements on Bati Oromo lands. Adding to this problem, in the last time, the FDRE government has grabbed Kesem Gadi and Abaroo from Oromia special zone and gave it to Afars. As a result, they assume that they took these Kebeles legally and want to do the same again (BWK-1, 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati).

Most key informants of Telalak Afar, on the other hand, stated that we Afars did not setup new settlements on the land of Bati Oromo; instead we established new villages on our lands. We even remember that our settlement was once at Cheffii and Odda Kebeles [ Kebeles in Bati Woreda administration now] during our childhood time. Therefore, not only Kesem Gadi and Abaroo Kebeles but also Cheffii and Odda kebeles were our previous settlements though they are now under Bati Oromo administration. Hence, constructing new houses around these areas couldn't be taken as illegal expansion to Bati Oromo lands (TWK-4, 19<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Telalak).

According to various studies, the struggle for access to natural resources- notably land- has gradually emerged as a crucial livelihood issue in various developing countries. Land is a factor of production which has played a pivotal role in influencing most inter-ethnic conflicts (Douma, 2003; Odhiambo, 2012).

Similar to the above authors, FGD informants argue that before Telalak Afars established new settlements for permanent inhabitation without the consent of Bati Oromos, conflicts in the border area had mostly been considered as temporary one over pasture and water since it was not a struggle for permanent territorial control. Later on, however, the people of Telalak Afar moved into Bati Oromo lands by considering these lands as their own territorial domain. As a result, Bati Oromos didn't hesitate to take countervailing actions that usually led to bloody confrontations (BWFGDM 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati).

Hence, one of the underlying causes for the conflict between Telalak Afar and Bati Oromo is not a matter of pasture and water for their pastoralist life but it is mainly the issue of permanent territorial claim. Accordingly, the poor demarcation of borderlands has changed a peaceful and cooperative utilization of resources into a zero sum game of where violent conflicts have been repeatedly occurred. This finding, on the other hand, is inconsistent with the work of Markakis (1992) who revealed that pastoral communities in the Horn of Africa move from place to place in search of pasture and water which leads to frequent competition and fighting over them. Contrary to the above, Telalak Afar focus group discussants argued that

*Before certain years ago, Afar people who have been living around the border area asked Bati Oromo people to use the land together for irrigation purpose many times even though it belonged to Afar but they were not interested for common use albeit Bati Oromos knew that the area belonged to Afar. Despite ownership rights, Afar people did not demand to take an exclusive advantage of the land; instead, our claim was merely having a share. But, the reverse was true for Bati Oromo people (TWFGDM, 26<sup>th</sup> March, Telalak).*

Contrary to the above, an elder from Bati reflected his view as follows. The Afars claim that the land of Damatoo, Odda and Chefii kebeles (now under Bati) as their own via providing an evidence of having born and grown up at these areas at resolution forums. On our part, we have sufficient evidences that not only Damatoo, Odda and Chefii kebeles but also Burka, Bistima, Kesem Gadi and Gawas [currently belong to Afar] are the lands of Oromo people (BWK4, 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2021).

One of our evidence is our fathers' cereal burrow [literally ye'ehl gudguad in Amharic] which we only know its specific place, but Telalak Afars don't. We have shown it for nobody still now because of our suspicion that if Afars know the specific place, they may destroy it.

Therefore, when fair governmental investigators come for fair decision, we will show it (ibid).

Plus to the above, another Bati Oromo local elder added additional evidence to claim the land as their own. He narrates that there was an Oromo landlord called Chiqa Kassa (Chiqa in Oromifa means landlord) who had been the administrator of the conflicting places during the imperial regime. At that time, a road was constructed over a small town named after him as Kassa gita, meaning the road of Kassa albeit the place Kassa gita now is under Afar region. While Kassa gita was being constructed, a foreign constructor died in a sudden accident and we Bati Oromos paid the compensation. If the owner of the road and the land were Afars', they would pay the compensation.

So, we have legal tax receipts that we paid to the government of the then time. This and similar documents confirm that the land belongs to us (interview with an elder at Bati, 2021). Sooner or later, the main point that we comprehended from the analysis of the field data is that no matter to whom the contentious territories belong to, territorial claim that ensures economic security has been continuing to be one of the structural causes for the conflict between the two ethnic groups.

## **4.2 Intermediate (Proximate) Causes of the Conflict**

Proximate causes are social, political, economic and environmental issues that contribute for the escalation of tensions and creation of enabling environments for violence (UNICEF Guide to Conflict Analysis, 2006). Therefore, based on the finding of the study, the proximate causes for the conflict between Afars and Bati Oromos are institutional drawback, cattle raiding and charcoal production.

### **4.2.1 Institutional Limitations: Breakdown of Rule of Law and Justice**

According to a lot of respondents from both ethnic groups, absence of responsible and accountable stakeholders, especially from the part of governmental institutions was one of the intermediate causes that made the interethnic conflict worse between Afars and Bati Oromos. It is largely related to the problems of law enforcement.

Informants said that woreda justice organs like police, courts, security body, and administrative authorities have hardly provided both proactive and reactive measures to fight against crime and bring about justice. They unjustly favour offenders with the poor logic of

ethnicity through hiding criminals of its respective community members. Hence, they stand for criminals on the basis of ethnicity instead of the victim group. They haven't also done conflict preventive tasks via awareness creation vis-à-vis controlling illegal activities like killing persons, cattle raiding and firing bullet (BWI-1, 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati (Segno Gebeya); TWI-3, 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2021 Telalak (Hamus Gebeya)). Accordingly, the grassroots governmental bodies aggravated the conflict of the two peoples, let alone calmed down and minimized it since they are more loyal to their ethnic group than rule of law and justice.

Moreover; when peace forums have been conducted, at different times, as regards territorial claim, new settlement, charcoal production and so forth, political officials of both woredas were lacking knowledge and skill to accommodate divergent opinions to solve the conflict through a democratic and peaceful manner. Various interests and ideas of the people, which could be an input for effective conflict resolution, were not well voiced, organized, and informed to the concerned body; instead political elite manipulation and desire, lack of open-mindedness took the primacy. This remained to be one instigator for the conflict many times (BWFGDM, 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021; TWFGDM, 26 March, 2021).

Besides, most of woreda political officials lacked political commitment to implement decisions which were reached at different peace conferences; instead they did conflict-causing activities such as establishing new settlement at the contested areas letting those individuals and groups which violate law and order for their personal advantages (BWI-5 , 8<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati (Segno Gebeya).

Moreover, higher governmental institutions like regional and zonal administrations were not also discharging their responsibility by sustainably observing and following up to resolve the conflict. Instead they were not free from what woreda institutions were committing even though some zonal officials tried to create conducive environment so as to resolve the conflict. Sooner or later, they did not take appropriate measurement on woreda and kebele officials who were engaged in igniting the conflict. For instance, in 2009 mediation forum, there was an agreement between the two ethnic groups to stop new settlement expansion at the conflicting area; but Telalak Afar violated the consensus reached and regional and zonal administrations failed to take appropriate measures upon guilty woreda officials (BWK-4 and BWK-5, 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati).

Moreover, a key informant demonstrated that not only woreda and Zonal government officials but also kebele administrators and the community itself have developed a culture of

being a safe haven for criminals. If criminals are not brought to justice, the victims pursue revenge. This makes the conflict complex and laborious. When problems occur, the society simply externalizes and exaggerates it instead of inward looking (TWK-6, 19<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Telalak). This implies that the weakness of both the community, and Woreda and kebele institutions enabled criminals not to comply with the law and hand over themselves to justice. This worsened up the intensity of the conflict from time to time and ruled out the realization peace for two ethnic groups.

#### 4.2.2 Livestock Looting

Livestock Looting is a usual traditional phenomenon in the pastoralists' lifestyle, and is implicitly approved by traditional leaders. It is also taken as a ritual processes wherein young men are proved to be ready for manhood and to take responsibility in the community. In pastoral communities, accumulation of livestock reflects not merely growing of wealth but also increases personal status (Mkutu, 2003). That is why pastoralist communities in many parts of the country focused on livestock raiding since ancient times.

The study revealed that livestock looting is one of the aggravating factors of conflict between Bati-Oromos and Telalak Afar ethnic groups. This practice has been exacerbated, especially, after violent conflict has been outbreaken in 2016. Informants of the study also confirmed that a cattle looting was one of the proximate causes of Bati Oromo and Telalak Afar ethnic group conflicts. FGD members (26<sup>th</sup> March, 2021) from Telalak Afar stated that they were fighting with their Bati Oromo counter parts not merely for territory related issues, but also for their livestock that Bati Oromos took for the purpose of selling or slaughtering.

The FGD members from Afar narrated the scenario as follows. In 2017, Bati Oromos killed our herders and took 200 Camels. Then, we, Afar elders, selected famous people and sent them to Kemise. The Bati's elders then acknowledged that the problem was serious and that those who did were to blame, and said that, indeed, men have been killed and animals have been stolen from both of us, retaliation is a loss and let us reconcile and forgive each other. Then we, Afar's elders, said that if you understand the problem and believe the truth, it is enough for us. We told them that they can't afford to pay for 200 camels and what we need is reconciliation. Then we blessed each other promised not to look badly. However, less than a week later, their children beat our herders and started clearing our forest in Chefii and Abilaloo kebeles, and then the clashes has been broken out; they are always the ones who start the fight (TWFGM, 26<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Telalak).

The report from Telalak Woreda Administration strengthens the above findings. The report indicated that Bati Woreda peace committee members collected 8250 Birr from its community and paid it to their Telalak Afar counter parts for the purpose of Camel looting compensation that Bati Oromo youths have snatched from Afar herders (A monthly report of Telalak Woreda, 2010). The data which was obtained from Bati informants also displayed that large numbers of sheep, goats and cattle were taken by Afars and sold overseas (BWK-8 and BWK-7, 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati). This tells us livestock looting has been continuing to be a reciprocal “business” which exacerbates the conflict between the two groups. In this regard, the study of Bekele Hundie provided important insights.

He stated that since the pastoral economy has been integrated with the commercial economy these days, an access to domestic and external livestock markets has been increasing. Hence, the purpose of looting surpasses cultural reasons and it is taken as a means of earning income via selling livestock in an open markets. This implies the change in the trend of looting for “culture” to “commerce.” This highly affected the extent and frequency of conflicts in pastoral communities in three ways.

First, looting livestock for commercial purpose is less tolerable and the victims are more likely to take revengeful actions, because, it is extensive in nature. Second, it involves numerous actors such as the looters, Livestock traders and illegal arms’ traders, and others. Since these actors share few common norms and values, traditional institutions are less effective in managing conflicts associated with commercial raiding (Hundie, 2010).

Third, commercial looting increases the probability that looted animals will quickly become inaccessible to its owners, and it makes negotiations to return the animals ineffective since the animals are sold overseas or elsewhere in Ethiopia. The victim group’s usual response is thus retaliation by using its institutions of violence (Hundie, 2010). Cattle rustling is also embedded in sophisticated and organized criminal complexes and neo-patrimonial patronage systems connected through arms trafficking networks, patronage and stolen cattle that extend throughout the region and even the world. Accordingly, the point to note in this regard is that livestock looting should not be taken as a simple and traditional cause of conflict among pastoralist communities, rather the issue is a serious one with a great national security and economic implications.

### 4.2.3 Charcoal Production

The other proximate cause of conflict between the two groups is charcoal production. According to most informants from both peoples, previously, due to good historical relations and geographical proximity, Telalak Afars and Bati Oromos used to have strong economic interdependence, especially tied by local markets. Accordingly, Telalak Afars had mostly been supplying livestock and livestock products whereas Bati Oromos had been delivering both livestock and agricultural products for they were semi-pastoralists; they were exchanging each other's products (TWI-5 and TWI-6, Telalak (Hamus Gebeya), 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2021).

However, after the eruption of serious conflicts in recent times, commercial activities between them totally interrupted. This resulted in loss of economic advantages (on both sides) previously obtained from mutual trading. In order to cope up with this economic shortcoming, the two ethnic communities, especially Telalak Afars, turned their face to the production firewood and charcoal through deforestation and began to sell it along main roads (Awash–Mile & Mile–Bati). This led to the question of ownership over the forest lands i.e. both consider it as their own. This has also been inflaming the conflict now and then (ibid).

In support of the above finding, a key informant informed that Telalak Afar people increased their deforestation activities for the sake of firewood and charcoal production especially after the last three and four years by cutting down indigenous trees, which has been adding problems on the already fragile biophysical environment, increasing the depletion of natural resources. In addition to ecological imbalance, this has been creating another problem i.e. a question of ownership; because Bati Oromo people have been using the grass within the forest for their animals even if there is no clear demarcation point. This has been in turn exacerbating the conflict between Bati and Telalak people (BWK-1, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2021, Bati).

From the aforementioned evidences, one can deduce that the interruption of harmonious historical relation of the two peoples and the eruption of violent conflicts between them produced by-product outcomes regarding forest lands. Ecological imbalance due to deforestation and territorial ownership of forest lands remained one proximate cause that has been fuelling the conflict.

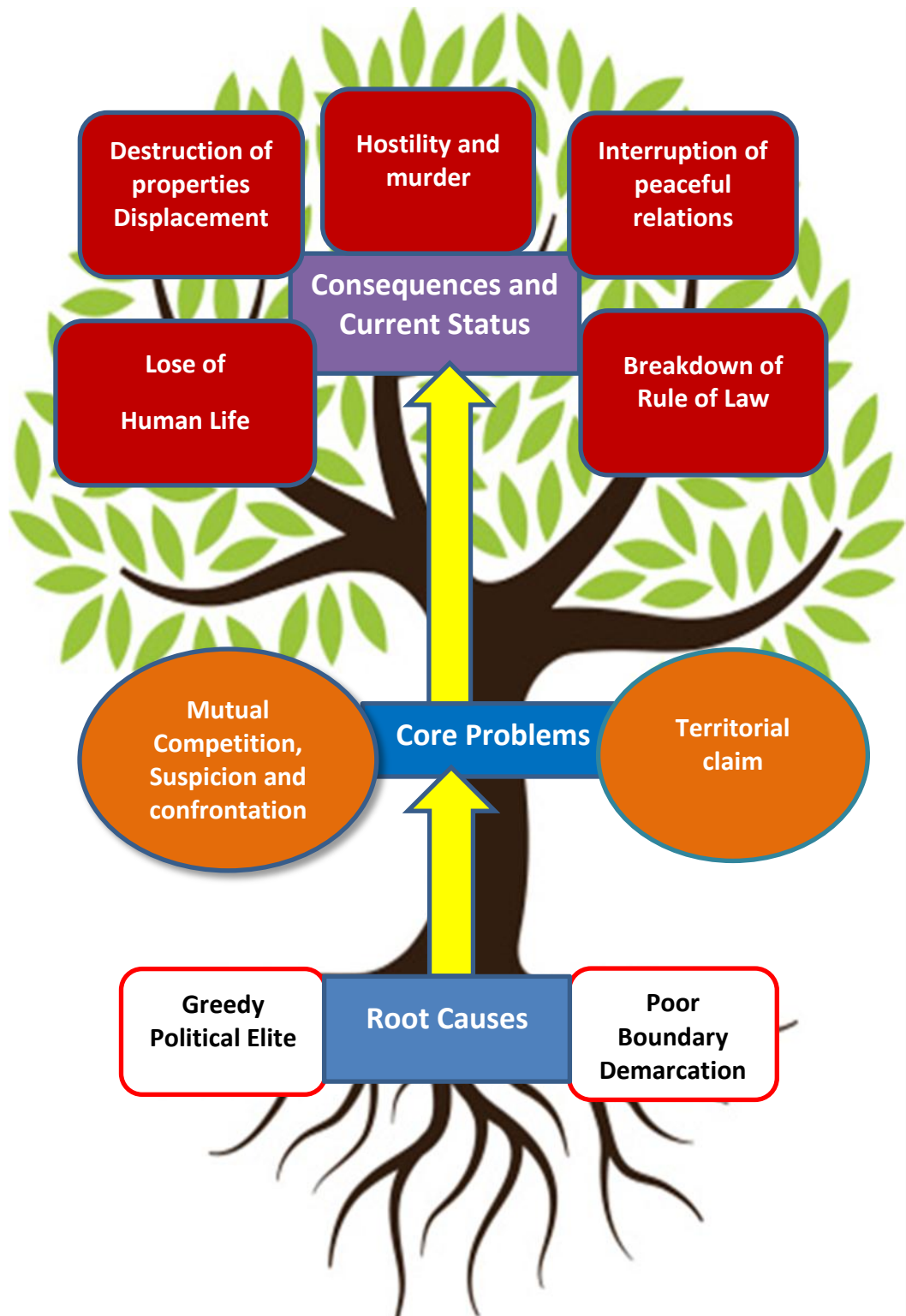
#### 4.2.4 Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons

Although definitions of small arms differ, the definition set by the 1997 UN Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms is often considered as a starting point. Small arms are a category of conventional weapons designed for personal use. Small arms are both durable and portable, and are long-lived, potentially with numerous users and re-users. They are mobile and relatively easy to conceal, making them easy to trade, move, hide or steal. Small arms are light, small and easy to use, even by children.

High circulation of illegal weapons and competition to demonstrate superiority with arms over one another is the other proximate causes of conflict. According to Bati Oromo key informants, the abundance of illegal small arms and light weapons adds fuel to the fire which was raised between the two ethnic groups. In the past, conflict technologies were traditional. Afars and Bati Oromos used to fight with spears, bows, swords, and, in rare cases, non-automatic rifles. Nowadays, if these old war weapons exist, it is only for their symbolic value. Instead, modern firearms are used to attack and defend (BWK-2, 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati; BWK-8, 12<sup>th</sup> March, Bati).

Malam (2014) indicated that the fundamental implication of small arms accumulation and circulation is in its tendency to pave ground for higher risk of violent and/armed conflict. The supply of arms stimulates violence instead of dialogue and has many undesirable effects. As a result, one of the implicit factors behind the conflict sustainability or instability in the study area is access to modern war technologies.

Figure 3: the conflict of Telalak Afar and Bati Oromo in a conflict Tree



Source: The researcher's Analysis

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5. Attempts Taken to Resolve the Conflict and Responsible Factors for its Failure

In this chapter, it is attempted to examine various efforts made by modern and traditional conflict resolution institutions in managing and solving and measures taken to transform the relationship between Bati-Oromos and Telalak Afars. Factors behind the failure of such efforts to bring about the intended outcomes will also be part of this chapter.

#### 5.1. Attempts Taken by Different Stakeholders to Resolve the Conflict between the Two Ethnic Groups

Although there are several Modern institutions established for managing and resolving inter and intra-regional state conflicts in Ethiopia, the house of federation is the most significant and relevant constitutional organ. In collaboration with the House of Federation, the Ministry of Federal Affairs plays an important role in keeping peace and order in the Regional States under certain conditions.

The primary responsibility of solving boundary related conflicts resides to the respective regional states. However, the regional states opted to be quite about the conflict between the two groups. The rationale behind the regional governments to abstain themselves from managing and solving the conflict is that due to the threat that the conflict may take a regional form since the two ethnic groups are found in two different regional states (BWK-1, 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati; TWK-9, 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Telalak).

After the Federal Government realized the failure of the two regional states to manage and resolve the frequent border dispute, it started to take its own initiatives including organizing conferences for community leaders who are living along the border of the two regional states. As all BWFG and TWFGD members (March, 2021) stated, the issue of border in the study area is under the control of federal government.

Two years ago, it sent surveyors to study boundary disputes and demarcate the contested area though no practical demarcation has been made yet (TWK-9, 11 March, 2021, Telalak). As the researcher also observed it in his field trip experience, the Federal Police force has also been deployed around the conflict areas, Burka and Chachatu. However, the federal government made such kinds of efforts as recent as the 2018's political change in Ethiopia (BWK-1, 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati).

According to the majority of interviewees of both ethnic groups, the main tasks of conflict management and resolution were limited to Woreda and to some extent at Zonal levels. Accordingly, the Zonal and Woreda level administrations and peace and security bureaus made various efforts (as we discuss below) vis-à-vis conflict resolution process though it remained unsuccessful.

### **5.1.1 Establishing formal Conflict Protection and Resolution Offices**

According to documental evidences and the researcher's field observation, in both Bati and Telalak Woreda administrations, the conflict protection and resolution offices were established to analyse causes and consequences of previously occurred conflicts, assisting conflict management, resolution and transformation processes through providing scientific and timely information or data for the actors involved in such a process.

However, these offices are not as such effective in realizing its intended objectives due to various challenges like lack of human and financial resources. So as to study the causes, consequences and signals of conflict at different times and places, sufficient human, material and financial resources are compulsory inputs (TWK-9, 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2021, Telalak). However, these conflict protection and resolution offices are suffering from lack of human and financial capital. For instance, in Telalak Woreda, merely a single individual has been assigned for this very important and critical issue. Adding to this challenge, this individual can't speak the working language of the study area, Afar' aff (Afarigna).

### **5.1.2 Forming Peace Committees and Efforts made to Enforce their Decisions**

According to the data gathered from key informants and documentary sources of the two Woreda Administrations, various discussions, reconciliations, negotiations and mediation efforts are usual. Peace committee members of the two ethnic groups are mainly charged with facilitating this process, especially in the post 1991 period. For instance, there were various formal contacts and discussions made by bordered Kebeles' peace committee members of the two Woreda administrations to discuss over different matters per two weeks a month. The basic agenda of their September, 19, 2010's meeting was focused on 'the problem of cattle looting and mechanisms of appropriate compensation' (Telalak Woreda Administration report, 2010).

The report indicates that Bati Woreda peace committee members, on their first round meeting with their Telalak Afar counter parts, came up with 3000 birr which was collected to

compensate camel looting and 5250 birr for the second round meeting held in November, 04, 2010 and gave the collected money for the concerned body where the two Woredas' administrations, peace and security bodies and all peace committee members attended. In the time stated above, the committee members raised the insufficiency of the collected money for Camel compensation and the need to coordinated efforts so as to stop deforestation and charcoal production that Telalak Woreda's farmers made around Abaro, Kesem Gadi and other Kebeles which are under Telalak Woreda Administration (ibid).

There are various documentary sources obtained from Both Woreda offices which indicated the aforementioned types of discussions and committee member meetings were conducted at different times. However, though such efforts are common to solve the conflict between the two ethnic communities, the root causes of the conflict such as clear boundary demarcation and politicization of ethnicity remained untouched affairs.

### **5.1.3 Organizing Peace Conferences at Different Times**

In collaboration with federal government and some NGOs, the Zonal and Woreda Administrations organized several peace conferences. The most notable one was the Bati's Peace Conference which was held in January 20, 2019 with the slogan 'our historical unity for our development and generation'. It was based on preliminary study focused on the historical roots of the two ethnic groups, the ties of the two ethnic groups, the formation of Bati and its relation with the two ethnic groups, good historical values and current problems in applying it, the current conflict between the two communities and the 2018 new political reform in Ethiopia and related facts, the formation of TPLF and ethnic federalism, the current status of their conflict and common stances that have to be taken (peace conference document prepared for Afar and Oromo peoples 2019, Bati,).

Similar peace conferences were held in Kemisie and Samara though nothing was achieved in effectively managing, solving and transforming the conflict (BWFGDM, 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati). The above conference's preliminary study strongly underlined that the TPLF regime played the lion share in igniting not only the ethnic conflict of Afar and Bati Oromos but also other parts of the country. Nonetheless, as per the conference paper, there are two important points that have to be underscored. Firstly, the TPLF regime was either a direct actor that exacerbate the conflict as stated in the conference or failed to take appropriate measures to manage and solve ethnic conflicts in the study area; secondly, conference totally ignore both economic and political root causes of the conflict between the two ethnic groups.

## 5.2 Factors for the Failure of Conflict Resolution Attempts

Although several conflict resolution attempts were tried by different actors, no fruitful outcome was obtained due to a lot of barriers. Depending on the information obtained from the informants, the major setbacks are listed below.

### 5.2.1 Incapacitation of Elders and high Involvement of Political Elites in the Conflict Resolution process

Ethiopia is rich in terms of Traditional institutions for mutual assistance, resource management and utilization as well as conflict resolution mechanisms. People are very sensitive to their values and norms; in most parts of the country, especially in the pastoralist community, it seems that people obey their traditional leaders and elders than modern system such as the police and courts. Indigenous institutions can either help to solve conflicts or play another significant role in community's well-being, stability and security because in most parts of the country conflict is a communal responsibility. However, at these days, in most conflict area, this significant role has become deteriorated (Feyissa, 2014:49).

Even though we have age old traditional ways of solving conflicts using traditional leaders and elders, their capacity has been eroded from time to time as political elites manipulate most of the conflict resolution process. Accordingly, the roles of community elders have been diminished and become a bridge to achieve hidden objectives of political elites. This resulted in loss of trust of the people on local elders; and then the people began to consider the efforts of those elders as superficial (BWK, 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati).

Similar to Tigst's (2014) study, FGD results revealed that, in Afar and wollo Oromia ethnic groups, there were functional traditional institutions that play a significant role in time of peace and contention in various aspects of life using customary rules and regulation. They were discharging ample responsibilities like resettling displaced individuals, compensating the victims and conducting reconciliation processes. Hence, elders of the clan were making significant economic and political decisions. However; the role of those traditional institutions became increasingly incapacitated (TWFGDM, 26<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Telalak).

Some key informants from Tlalak Woreda also confirmed the above and said that most of the traditional institutions in our society became weak in relation to conflict resolution and people do not have a trust on them as before. One of the responsible factors for the minimal role of traditional institution is government officials; because in conflict resolution process,

most of its reconciliation progress is done by government officials, which are supposed to be mere facilitators of the resolution, but the key player on the ground. Now a day, the conciliation processes are conducted based on what government official will and the role of community elders is confined to pray for the two ethnic groups (TWK-9, 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2021, Telalak). It tells that government officials are swaying and diminishing the roles of indigenous institution in conflict prevention, management and resolution process.

Over and above, FGD data obtained from Bati Woreda had shown the declining role of informal institutions due to its leaders tussle for survival. This forced them to give less attention to their social responsibilities (BWFGDM, 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati). And also, their credibility and acceptance by the clan members became deteriorated alarmingly. It is because traditional leaders often engage in party politics and lack objectivity in the reconciliation process as they are influenced by officials for political or financial gain (Ibid). All the data mentioned so far indicate that high involvement of political elite in the conflict resolution processes is one of the basic factors to incapacitate the roles of elders in such a process and make the conflict persistent and recurrent between Bati Oromo and Telalak Afar ethnic groups.

### **5.2.2 The Complexity of Issues and Multiplicity of Actors in the Conflict**

Another encumbrance that served as a setback for the failure of past conflict resolution attempts was that the issues of the conflict became complex. As a result, community elders' realms to solve the conflict through traditional methods of conflict arbitration faced limitations. As obtained from FGDs of the two ethnic groups, indigenous institutions' role and contribution in the effort of resolving conflict are getting less as contemporary conflicts involve political issues which are beyond the experiences and capabilities of these institutions. The respondents further underlined that due to feeling of 'we and they, narrow locality assumptions', the nature, actors and causes of the conflicts became changed dramatically. As a result, both ethnic groups began to claim the territory of the other as their own with a win-lose or zero sum game approach (BWFGDM, 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati; TWFGDM, 26<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Telalak).

Sintayehu's study also reinforced the above argument. He stated that the complexity of issues in modern economic, social, and political spheres became visible. Accordingly, the current problems are believed to be beyond the realm of traditional methods of conflict arbitration by local elders; because, these developments diminished elders' social and economic sphere of

influence. Furthermore, the multiplicity nature of actors in existing recurrent conflicts and their complex interests significantly challenged traditional institutions and made their conflict resolution efforts difficult and questionable (Sintayehu, 2016).

The Telalak Afar Woreda Security bureau official said that the resolutions of the traditional institutions are not esteemed as previous time in the eyes of conflicting parties owing to the fact that the strife nowadays involves the issue of land ownership and boundary issue. Likewise, these traditional institutions need to be funded by governmental offices for its effective functioning even to the issues which are under their capacity (TWK-2, 20 March, 2021, Telalak). In addition, political leaders from both ethnic groups pressure elders to entertain the political elites' agendas in the peace process (BWK-9, 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati).

Bati Woreda government official did also not negate the above information and claimed that the existing conflict between the two ethnic groups could not be resolved using traditional conflict resolution institutions as the root causes of the conflict are not similar with the past; rather, it involves the question of demarcating a clear cut boundary between the border of the two regional states (Afar and Amhara), which is beyond the realm of community leaders and elders (BWK-2, 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati). This shows that the attempts of the governments and other stakeholders at different levels to manage conflicts between these ethnic groups did not bring desirable outcomes due to the complexity of the issues and the limitations of traditional methods of conflict arbitration by local elders.

### **5.2.3 Geo-political Factors**

In addition to the above dynamics, geo-politics also plays undeniable role for the existence of perpetual conflict between the two ethnic groups. It is due to the fact that the geo politics of Afar is comfortable for the proliferation of small arms and light weapons because of its proximity with the border of Eritrea and Djibouti.

According to most focus group discussants from Bati Oromo said that Afar region has an international border with Eritrea and Djibouti. Based on this border, there is high flow of war weapons and our Afar brothers have this access. When simple conflict happens between two individuals between the two ethnic groups, it expands and simply takes the form of ethnic conflict. One of the contributing factors for it is that due to the interest of conflict entrepreneurs who are involved in illegal arms trade and the existence of ample armaments around there (BWFGDM, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2021, Bati).

Some key informants from Telalak Afar did not also disclaim the fact and said that it is obvious that we have an access of weapons but it is mainly to defend ourselves than being a threat to others. Rather, Bati Oromos have more arms support from Oromo Liberation Front (OLF, particularly, OLF Shene) that ignited conflicts that led to huge material and human damage (TWK-1, 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2021, Telalak). This implies that geopolitics is one of the main factors that are responsible for the failure of several conflict resolutions efforts between the two ethnic groups.

Moreover, Bati Oromo government officials confirmed that Afar ethnic groups lives in Eritrea and Djibouti. They have the same identity, belongingness, interdependent with their Afar brothers here in Ethiopia. Hence, when Ethiopian Afar gets into conflict with Bati Oromos, those Afars who live in neighbouring countries give man power and weapon for their ethnic members (BWI-9, 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati). This tells us they are secondary actors in the conflict which play a shadow role in the conflict. Hence, the more multiple actors involved in the conflict, the more the conflict to be long-lasting as well as recurrent.

#### **5.2.4 Socio-Cultural Factors: The Methods of Compensation**

In the process of resolving conflict, compensation process that aims to correct wrong acts is carried out. One of the objectives of reparation is to make the offender regret about his mistake. However, as participants of the study revealed, when a person commits a wrong act and is made to pay compensations, especially in Afar, it is all the clan members, not the wrong doer that subscribe and pay compensations. Hence, no economic and moral pains are going to affect the wrong doer. This neither enables the wrong doer to take lessons from his mistake nor satisfies the victims to forgive a harm made on him. , he tried to revenge against his opponents (BWK-9, 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati; TWI-4, 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2021, Telalak). This idea was supported by one of the informants from Bati Oromo as follow.

*In 2016, I lost my beloved father. In the conciliation process, based on our reconciliation culture, his blood compensation was given to our ethnic group which is saved for the purpose of payment for other ethnic groups if there is a victim within their. Nothing that can heal the lesion was given to me and the offender also did not ask apologize to me. In this situation how can I forget the blood of my father? With this circumstance, forgetting it is so humiliation in our culture. Due to this case, there is no other alternative than murdering an individual from their ethic group (BWK-7, 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati).*

The above information gives us significant point that socio-cultural methods of conflict resolution, especially the way of compensation, is the other factor that makes the conflict recurrent and calls for basic modification by the concerned stakeholders.

#### **5.2.5 Lack of Early Warning Mechanisms and Conflict Sensitive Development Projects**

As most Key informants of Telalak Afar reflected, the efforts of managing conflicts are visible after lives are lost and properties are looted and damaged. In other words, government officials (Zone, Woreda and Kebele) are emphasised on corrective (reactive) rather than preventive (proactive) measures. Most measures were taken by officials and peace committees after conflict happened. Moreover, the numbers of conflict sensitive development projects, which can create harmonious relations, in the study area are limited (TWK-9, 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2021, Telalak).

Similarly, one elder from Bati Oromo confirmed that due to its remoteness, the nature of the land, security and other related factors, they are suffering from lack of developmental projects which are instrumental to develop interrelationship, tolerance, open-mindedness (BWI-10, 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati).

#### **5.2.6 Local Governments' Institutional Weakness and Inadequate Support from the Regional Governments**

The weakness of local governmental institutions accompanied with insufficient support from the two regional governments has continued to be one challenge to the process of effective conflict resolution. In addition, the conflict has also received little attention from regional governments as they consider it typical and elementary. They did not see this recurrent conflict as destructive in terms of lives and properties.

Moreover, institutional weaknesses are evident in the existing Woreda as well as Zonal security sectors in managing inter-personal conflicts before it takes ethnic forms. Instead of managing the conflict at its initial stage, many local government officials implicitly support the two conflicting parties based on ethnic affiliations. Hence, they were igniting the conflict and became secondary actors. As a result, individual crimes (homicide, lootings, property damages etc.) increased as local security institutions failed to handover suspected individuals before the law (BWK-2, 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati; TWK-9, 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2021, Telalak).

The engagement and contribution of federal institutions is also increasingly waning in the study area. For instance, absence of involvement of the Ministry of Federal Affairs is a good

example. This heightens the difficulty capacity limitations in the study area. Likewise, less emphasis given to traditional conflict resolution institutions and lack of cooperation between these institutions and the formal ones in resolving conflicts are still the bottleneck of the resolution.

### 5.2.7 Disregarding the Root Causes during Conflict Resolution Attempts

According to most focus group discussants from both ethnic groups, instead of exploring the root cause causes which lead to recurrent clashes between the two ethnic groups and thereby giving permanent remedies, most conflict resolution attempts are revolved around immediate or triggering cause of the conflict. In other words, the central problem of the conflict between Telalak Afar and Bati Woreda is largely the issue of territorial claim accompanied by greedy political and economic interests of the elites. However, when destructive conflict happens due to insignificant triggering factors, the whole stakeholders discuss and focus over these factors; and thus, this is one of the responsible factors that made durable peace unattainable in the study area (BWFGDM, 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati; TWFGM, 26<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Telalak).

Informants also claimed that the federal government acted irresponsibly as it failed to give emphasis and seek final solutions as boundary related issues are concerned. They believe that if the government passes a binding decision based on scientific inquiry regarding boundary claims and appropriate punishment are given to those that violet this decision and ignite the conflict, sustainable solutions and peace will be achieved (BWK-6, 5<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati).

Another key informant from Telalak also reinforced this argument and underlines so as to realize long-lasting peace, the root causes, the triggering causes and immediate causes of the conflict have to be identified and differentiated scientifically (TWK-3, 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2021, Telalak). Moreover, the narration of another key informant from Bati strongly supports the above argument certainty as follows.

*In 2011 there was a conflict between Bati Oromo and Telalak Afar ethnic groups. So as to solve that conflict there was reconciliation program at woldia town. Initially, some kebele and Woreda political bodies from both Woreda were arrested. Government deployed its security body for two months. Finally, different forums and conferences were prepared by the government and other stake holders to create peace and make the people to turn back to their residence place and live together peacefully. It is indisputable that subsequent to these actions and activities of the*

*government short term peace was succeeded in the area. Nonetheless, all the people in the conflict area from both regions perceived that the conflict was unsettled; they are at the war front as long as their main questions are not addressed. In 2012, another conflict also erupted as expected (BWK-7, 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2021).*

All these information tell us that while conflicts erupt, all the resolution endeavours are focused on immediate factors rather than the root causes, and this is just postponing the existing conflict into a potential violence and makes all the efforts futile and peace short lived. The result of different conflict resolution attempts tried at different place and time show the above reality. Consequently, come to grips with immediate and triggering factors and overlooking the underlying factors made the conflicts unsettled.

## CHAPTER SIX

### 6. Basic Dynamics of the conflict and Its Current Status

#### 6.1 The Dynamics of the Afar-Wollo Oromos Inter-Ethnic Conflict

##### 6.1.1 National and Local Dynamics: The 2018 Political Reform in Ethiopia and its Effect on the Conflict

During the imperial (1930–1974) and military (1974–1991) eras, exclusivist and authoritarian political institutions played a role in the emergence and ripening of contending nationalisms in Ethiopia. After the demise of the military regime in 1991, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) introduced centralised but federated political institutions. It further complicated the nationalist struggle by creating multiple lines of ethno-nationalist groups the country. The rising of competing ethno-nationalisms from mid-2010 onwards led to the relative waning of EPRDF in particular and state structures in general (Semir, 2019). This resulted in further intensification of ethnic mobilisations and political struggle among party members.

The recession of the country's economy has also played a role both as a source of grievance by firing up ethnic mobilisation as well as a factor that encouraging many to engage in acts of violence. To tackle the problem of violence in Ethiopia sustainably, the ideological and institutional context of the country had to be changed urgently. The ruling party needed to transform itself both within its constituent parties as well as the coalition as a whole. Accordingly, the constituent parties tried to make inclusive political dialogue and negotiated over the national issues to be prioritised to detoxify the political environment.

However, particularly, for the last three years prior to the 2018's political reform, the ruling party (with the leading role of TPLF) failed to resist mob influences, and political grievances and violent acts became exacerbated. This enforced the incumbent party to renegotiate over inter-governmental power relations so as to contain and prevent violent conflicts in a new fashion. As a result, in April 2018, a political reform, accompanied by new political leadership, was made by the EPRDF from within.

In its first year of office, the new prime minister took important measures which seem to broaden the democratic political space that impressed the world. He unblocked hundreds of jammed news sites and thereby, tried to expand media freedom, released thousands of political prisoners, welcomed banned political groups which were living abroad, appointed

non-party figures to the positions of influence and revoked repressive laws such as Media, Civil Society anti-Terrorism laws once used to target political opponents. These all moves lifted hopes and Morales upon many Ethiopians and the global community too.

Simultaneously, however, the country witnessed violent conflicts for much of the past three years alarmingly. Notwithstanding an impressive record in the arena of opening the political space, the country has experienced large-scale ethnic clashes and violent conflicts which resulted in killing of thousands, displacements of millions and destruction of private and public properties. Although ethnic-based conflicts in Ethiopia are not new phenomena, their scale and intensity since 2018 became alarming. These incidents had been expanded almost all over the country. The conflict between Telalak Afars and Bati Oromos after the political change is also going to be analysed in a similar context. Accordingly, the followings are important dynamics that directly or indirectly contributed in escalating and de-escalating an inter-ethnic conflict between Telalak Afar and Bati Oromos.

#### ☞ **The Release of Prisoners of Various Crimes**

In relation to the political change, thousands of prisoners were released from the two ethnic groups in the name of ‘forgiveness and Medemer’; and it has its own effect on exacerbating the ethnic conflict in the study area. In relation to this, Telalak woreda administration stated that the federal government released thousands of prisoners and we have also followed the same suit and freed several prisoners (TWK-1, 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2021, Telalak; BWK-3, 14<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati).

The problem was, however, not on releasing them, but regarding the process of checking their criminal records. Some of the released prisoners were criminals who have been guilty of involving in illegal arms trade, of participating in igniting previous conflicts of the two communities and performing sexual harassment. These individuals have not been abstained from performing their usual criminal acts and have been playing a direct and a shadow role in aggravating inter-ethnic conflicts in the study areas (ibid). Hence, the finding of this study indicated that the release of criminals from prison affected the conflict resolution process and contributed to aggravate it.

## ☞ **Expansion of Illegal Arms' Trade**

The data obtained from FGD participants confirmed that the expansion of illegal arms' trade, particularly in the post political change periods, became one of the basic challenges which made conflict prevention, management and resolution efforts futile. They narrated that

*Before a year, a pregnant woman had accidentally gotten a child birth and we called to health centre for sending us an Ambulance and take her to the health centre so as to obtain professional support. But, they responded that the Ambulance has been sent to somewhere to bring another woman who has faced the same scenario. Alhamdulillah [all praises belong to Allah], he [Allah] heard the anguish and misery of that innocent women; their conspiracy has been exposed; she gave birth her child in her house and at the same time, the Ambulance has been faced an accident and capsized. The community members have been immediately gathered to save the life of the alleged patient. Surprisingly, however, the Ambulance was full of illegal arms. Then, the society became down casted and upset (TWFGDM, 26<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Telalak).*

We understand two important points from the above narration. Firstly, it indicates that how much the problem of illegal arms trade is deep-rooted after the political change. Secondly, those who are working in government structures and offices have involved in such criminal act either directly or indirectly. Because, Ambulance is primarily a public property and, all professionals in public health centre, including the driver of the Ambulance, are undoubtedly government workers. This implies that the government should ensure whether its properties and finance have been utilized for its intended purpose or not, and examine all its structures at all levels as the reform is still confined to the federal and regional levels.

The data gathered from border communities also highlighted illegal arms' trade has been continuing to be a basic obstacle to get out the two communities from conflict life cycle. They stated that since illegal weapons, particularly, the modern one became simply available and found on the hand of many of the community members, individuals have been killed from both sides at any time. What makes the issue more complicated is that the killers haven't been clearly identified as they use modern weapons that are popped up from far away, with compare to traditional small arms. This greatly challenged both traditional and modern ways of conflict resolution mechanisms. The killer neither pays Gumma (blood

reparation) for victim's family nor brought before law as his personality is hidden (TWI-5 and TWI-6, 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2021, Telalak).

This gelded conflict resolution efforts and several peace conference plans proposed by the two parties. They stated that they agree to ceasefire and plan discussion forums, and then, somebody kills someone else from either side; then, the planed discussion fails; and then, they plan another forum, but someone is killed before the forum is conducted (ibid). This is one factor that enforced the two communities to remain under conflict vicious cycle.

### ☞ **The Removal of TPLF from Ethiopian Centre Politics**

One of the fundamental changes that the 2018 political change brought in Ethiopia was the removal of the TPLF, a key player of Ethiopian politics for nearly three decades, from power centre, and the change in figural leadership. Accordingly, remarks of the new administration which painted the past as the dark, documentary videos which were released by the state Medias and the efforts made by the new administration to capture the TPLF's officials for alleged pre-Abiy's crimes highly deteriorated the relationship between Abiy's government and the TPLF (Semir, 2019).

According to the data obtained from key informants and documentary sources, the measurements taken by the new Prime Minister accompanied with his acceptance by the majority of the Ethiopian people at a time had a great implication for the TPLF to be dispossessed of its central role in Ethiopian power politics, and its very survival too. As a result, the party aimed at deteriorating the trust that the public developed towards the new leadership and forestalling the political change, thereby, revitalizing and handing itself back to the central power.

For doing so, TPLF designed different strategies including strengthening its regional military power and preparing for the imminent war; criticizing the new leadership and disseminating propaganda to local and international community using Mass Medias like Tigray TV and Dimtsi Woyane (DW) TV which were under its monopoly; and waging a proxy war through mobilizing ethnic conflicts and supplying technical, material and financial support for ethnic entrepreneurs. Moreover, TPLF was working with its previous puppet local and regional officials to spark and aggravate ethnic conflicts in each corner of the country (TWK-1, 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2021, Telalak; Peace Conference document, 2019, Bati).

The data obtained from Bati Woreda police report also confirmed the above findings. In the last year (2020), at midday, a member of Afar special police force was killed here in our town, Bati, by two individuals. One Oromo who tried to oppose such a crime was also highly injured by a gun popped by those criminals; but, the people and the security force co-ordinately subdued them. They were dressing just like Bati Oromo traditional style. However, after we made a strong investigation process, surprisingly they have been convinced for being Christian Tigregna speakers who received a mission from TPLF to create ethnic conflict between the two ethnic groups (BWK-3, 14<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati).

Moreover, the study ascertained that the Afar-Oromo conflict involved other actors, modern war weapons and technologies, organized military trainings. The data obtained from a key informant affirmed it. He narrated that

*We know Bati Oromos very well since antiquity; we know their culture, dressing style and the weapons they used for long periods. They had never cruel personality that mercilessly kills women and children. However, all the reverses are true now. In recently happened conflicts, we were not warring with Bati Oromos whom we know very well even their hair styles. But, now, there are strong actors who inspire them via providing modern weapons and train to wage war against us. Even their dressing and hair styles are totally unique. They have been using modern war arms as they are targeting at flank/loin when they pop from distance; within a difference of minutes, five or 10 individuals are killed. They began to kill women, children and elders. Now, being Afar is a sufficient condition to be killed by Wollo-Oromos (TWK-5, 19<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Telalak).*

### **6.1.2 The International Dynamics: Outbreak of COVID-19 and its Effect on the Conflict**

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, at the end of 2019, enforced almost all countries of the world to take different policy measures which had a huge social, economic, political, and peace and security implications at the local, national and international level. However, many of the measures taken exacerbated conflicts and disrupted the peace process. According to the data obtained from international organization for peace building (2020), in 43 countries, different levels of organized violence were recorded. In some countries, like Yemen, Colombia and the Philippines, the initial ceasefires have been quickly dissolved

while the intensification of violence in Libya, Somalia, Iraq, Cameroon, and Mozambique has been increased both related and unrelated to COVID-19.

The pandemic also worsened the relations between the key global super powers, particularly USA and China as Washington has repeatedly accused Beijing for being a cause for the COVID 19 global catastrophe while the Chinese government rejected the USA's accusation as a baseless and a signal of political harassment against China. In African context, the pandemic was a good opportunity for the strongmen who sought to further strengthen their political control. In Burundi, Angola, Rwanda, Uganda, Zimbabwe and Cameroon, for example, governments used epidemic protocols as a justification to further narrow the political space. Even in relatively democratic African states such as Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa, the policemen have using unnecessary forces to execute lockdown rules, and this created severe clashes, especially in Nigeria (International Crisis Group, 2021).

Ethiopia also cancelled the 2020 general elections; and the government was also declared state of emergency due to the threat of the pandemic. Though the federal government's decisions were right and expected as they were taken to curve the expansion of the pandemic, the TPLF not only condemned the decision of the national electoral board as unconstitutional and biased, but also held a Regional election in August 2020, in contrary to the decision of the electoral board (International Crisis Group, 2021). This highly aggravated the contention between the TPLF and the federal government. In this regard, it is a recent memory that the Ethiopian prime minister called, an election held in Tigray, 'a lunar election' held by irresponsible bodies. Here, covid-19 could be taken as one demonstration, which heightened the tension between the TPLF and the federal government.

Katarina Mustalista (2020) provided three basic insights to which are important to understand and analyse how the epidemic and the responses taken to curve COVID-19 affects conflicts and conflict resolution efforts at local, national and global level, particularly, conflict affected ones. Accordingly, based on these three concepts, I analysed how the epidemic exacerbated Bati-Oromos and Afar inter-ethnic conflicts as follows. First, the conflicting bodies capitalize all possible opportunities coming from policy responses. In this regard, FGD participants of Telalak Afar stated the measures that they took as follows.

When the occurrence of the epidemic in our country has been heard, health professionals gathered and informed us about necessary prerequisites to fight against the catastrophe. One of the important preconditions, as they told us, was avoiding crowding and keeping social

distance. In Afar, one of the main factors that invite the people to crowd is chewing Chat/Khat. So, we decided not to chew Khat to avoid crowding and dry its source. As a result, we told Bati-Oromo Khat traders that until Allah removes this plague, they couldn't sell Khat in our Woreda/district as the Khat mostly was come from Bati. But, they didn't refrain from doing so. Since then, we burned a car of Khat that Bati-Oromos had brought for sale. On the second day, Bati-Oromos killed six Afar men (TWFGDM 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Telalak).

Contrary to the above, an informant from Bati Oromo stated that Afars didn't burn our property for the sake of curving the spread of the disease; rather, it was intended to harm us. If they had really aimed at controlling the epidemic, they would have stopped shaking, washed their hands and wear masks carefully. Hence, Afars used the disease as an excuse to justify their irrational actions. On the next day, the young men, aware of the plot of Afars waged war against them; and many people have died from both sides (BWI-6, BWI-7 and BWI-8, 15<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati). This scenario confirmed the first insight of Mustalista (2020) since Afars used to capitalize the COVID-19 protection protocols to hurt Bati-Oromos; and it became a cause to revive the conflict of the two groups.

Secondly, as the basic focus is on fighting the epidemic, restrictive policy measures, which ban the movements and contacts of people, hurt peace efforts at all levels. The data obtained from Telalk and Bati Woreda Administrations was directly related to this notion. They stated that peace talks were temporarily suspended due to the fear of the spread of the Virus and the conflicts that have just begun after the epidemic was occurred (BWK-1, 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati; TWK-1, 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2021, Telalak). It is because, the meetings of the peace committees which have been held before the outbreak of the pandemic were called off. This makes peace and conflict management efforts very complicated.

Third, the economic recession puts a heavy strain on weak government institutions and governance. In this case, even if the interruption of Telalak Afar and Bati Oromo peace process were not directly related to the national economic fallout, the epidemic affected the peace process in the following way. After the pandemic has broken out, many members of our society became exposed for economic crisis and famine. As a result, we did our best to save these community members from starvation. So by this reason, different conferences and peace committee meetings which have been conducted before the pandemic were called off

due to lack of finance (BWK-1, 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati). Here, we observe the diversion of budget from peace building aims to downsizing the negative impacts of COVID.

In addition, as soon as the disease was broken out, the law enforcement process was neglected; and this created a good opportunity for those who want to escalate the conflict. This resulted in loss of life and displacement of people near the border. To sum up, the pandemic had a significant effect in exacerbating the conflict in all its forms. Because, initiations, money and time are important inputs needed to take advantage of opportunities for peace. The pandemic, however, prevented stakeholders from using all of these inputs for peace process.

## **6.2 The Current Status of Afar and Wollo Oromos Inter-Ethnic Conflict**

The data which were obtained from various documentary and non-documentary sources illustrate that the conflict not only severed their historical relationships but also caused serious economic, social and psychological crises in the community as highlighted below.

The Afar and Wollo Oromo communities had a long history of economic and social relations. Before 1991, these people lived in peace and harmony. Above all, conflicts were resolved through the traditional institutions. Since 1991, particularly, after the outbreak of 2008 violent conflict, however, their age old relationships kept deteriorating and conflicts have been continuing to be intensified. The findings of this study have shown that the political, economic and security-related variables were the main causes of the conflict, and interventions of the government to take the required measures were not only too little and late but also focusing on handling symptoms of the problem instead of resolving the root causes. There is also a great paradigm shift regarding the objects of the conflict between the two communities that the old pasture and water-related combats have been changed into territorial claim and expansion.

Moreover, the information obtained informants highlighted that due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 and its associated effects, the efforts to resolve the conflict have been completely halted. However, the epidemic couldn't be blamed for the interruption of the relations of the two conflicting parties (BWK-1, 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, Bati; TWK-1, 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2021, Telalak). Hence, the relationships between the communities were severed before the outbreak of COVID-19; and the epidemic can, however, be described as adding fuel to a fire and, interjecting and complicating the peace process.

The incident What I saw on my way from Bati to Afar and on my way back from Afar to Bati was also a great demonstration feelings of hatred and revenge have been shockingly deepening between the two communities. I stayed in Kombolcha for a week to complete the data gathering process in Bati. Since it was nearby and there was no transportation problem, I used to travel from Kombolcha to Bati every day, and gathered all the data what I considered necessary for the completion of the study, from Bati, in such way. Then, I had to go Afar, Telalak. Two days after the completion of data collection process in Bati, I went to Afar. Within a week, I gathered all the information what I need from the concerned bodies and returned to Bati.

When I was on a trip (from Afar to Bati), a man in Afar police uniform, but unarmed, began to ride with us. After we travelled 70 kilometres, all Afars got out of the car from the Kebele town called Kassagita, which is found in Ada'ar Woreda, in the Afar region. But, until we were traveling about 20 km from Kassagita, the man in the Afar police uniform didn't get off the bus. Other travellers who observed the situation asked the man why he had not landed in Kassagita. But, he refused to say anything and his only answer was silence. The passengers told the situation to the driver and then the driver got off the bus immediately (The Researcher's field observation, 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2021).

After many questions and arguments, the man with Afar police uniform began to speak; and we all understood that he was mentally ill, and the passengers told the driver that the man in the Afar police uniform had to be returned to Kassagita, and otherwise he will be killed unconditionally if he arrives at Bati. The driver then asked all the passengers to get out of the car, and the passengers got off. Then after, he took the mentally ill man in Afar police uniform back to Kassagita and returned to us, and we continued our journey to Bati (ibid).

The above experience illustrates the extent to which hatred and revenge are growing between the two groups in the study area. In addition, in my observation, there was another piece of evidence which supports the above illustration. In both of my journeys (when I went to Afar and came back from it), the bus was so overcrowded that there was no place to breathe; the people were even loaded like a luggage on the upper container compartment of the bus.

However, in each exit and entrance (checkpoints), no individuals or authorized bodies, including traffic policies, asked the driver why he loaded in that way. Surprisingly, however, the main task of the investigators in each checkpoint areas was solely focused on isolating identification cards of every passenger in steady of physical inspection. Frankly speaking, if

anyone was involving in illegal arms trafficking at the time, no one was able to investigate him/her. Then, I was confused about the purpose of the inspections which were made in exits and entrances.

Then after, I asked the person next to me that unless the driver is even given a verbal warning not to load people in such a dangerous way where both car accident and the expansion of COVID-19 would be happened and passengers are not physically examined even if they were be illegal drug or arms traffickers, what is the purpose of wasting our time and getting to be exhausted in the name of inspection in each exit and entrance. He told me that the inspection is simply to identify to which ethnicity individuals belong to, not to find out if they were innocent or illegal (interview with a passenger, 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2021). Once again, looking for a clear explanation, I asked him another question about the importance of identifying the ethnicity of individuals, and he told me something that shocked me as follows.

As you can see, I am an old man and can speak Afar-af (Afarigna). As a result, you may think of me as a native of Afar. However, I am neither Afar nor Oromo. I was born and growing in a town called Kutaber, far from Dessie around 10km. But, I have been living in Afar in Dewe Woreda since 1980s. I believe that I understood their language, their culture and their psychology. The people of Afar are God-fearing, faithful, gentle and brave. I also frequently come to Bati for business matters. As far as I know, both Afar and Oromos are good communities which have been intertwined economically, politically, socially and culturally. However, all these are now on the verge of being changed into a mere history due to the violent ethnic conflict between the two communities, which was out broken before 5 years. From then on, they would kill each other whenever they meet. As you can see, the inspection here is also focused on identification card for this cursed purpose (ibid).

He added that for all these evils, the biggest culprits are politicians; they feed the people unfounded lies, and then, the people accept the conspiracy of politicians as true and kill each other. These falsehoods of politicians have even been strongly eroding the transcendental cultural and religious values of both communities. In the past, even though there were some grazing land related conflicts between the two communities, no one attacked women, the elderly, or children. Women could safely go to the market and sell and buy whatever they want. But, now, things have been changed dramatically; women, children and the elderly are being mercilessly killed on both sides. Surprisingly, I even know an Afar woman who was killed while pregnant. In conclusion, the reasons for all these brutalities are disgusting and

fabricated narratives that politicians preached to the people on both sides, my son. However, since I don't know your genealogy well and I don't want to remember these bleak narratives that degrade the dignity of Afar and Oromo people, I dare not tell you literally (ibid).

As per the two situations discussed above, we illustrate three important points. Firstly, killing each other for no apparent reason has been continuing to be the order of the day between the two ethnic groups; no logical reason is needed to be killed rather than being Oromo or Afar. Secondly, as a result of the fear of this hostility and ruthless killing, socio-cultural and economic relations between the two communities became completely cut off. Thirdly, ethnic federalism, as a means to hate and discrimination in the last three decades, created mistrust and fear among the people as the passenger fear the researcher to clearly explain what the false narratives were.

In general, the existing condition of Bati-Oromos and Telalak Afar ethnic communities, in the study areas, implies how much the problem is complicated and resulted in property damage, loss of human life, violation of basic human and democratic rights, feeling of insecurity and reduction of free movement of people and declining of development efforts in the conflict sites. Historical values of interdependence and harmonious relations between these communities fallen into trouble now. It demonstrates that how much the gravity of the conflict in the study areas is very acute. Subsequently, this persistent conflict with both violent and non-violent nature became disastrous at one time and waned at another.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter deals with the final results of the study which incorporates the conclusion and the recommendation parts. In this regard, the researcher generalized and synthesized the key ideas of this paper by presenting the main findings of the study and finally put forward recommendations which help to mitigate the problem in the study area.

#### 7.1. Conclusion

Ethnic conflict is one segment of conflicts, which is found in almost all ethnically diverse countries of the world. What makes a conflict an ethnic one is that at least one conflict party is defined in ethnic terms where ethnic distinction becomes the primary spot of confrontation. In this regard, ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia were observed here and there albeit they are different in terms of intensities, actors, causes and consequences. Among ethnically sensitive conflicts which occur frequently in the country, Telalak Afar and Bati Oromos' conflict is one which has been growing ever more to be intricate though not received the attention of research scholars.

Accordingly, the main theme of this study was focused on the nature and dynamics of an inter-ethnic conflict Bati Oromo and Telalak Afar ethnic groups since 1991. It attempted to investigate the underlying and triggering causes, previous attempts taken by modern and traditional institutions to solve the conflict, and the justifications behind its failures to manage, resolve and transform it. Besides, it highlighted the effects of the 2018's political change and other local, national and international dynamics in escalating and de-escalating the conflict. Moreover, analysing the current status of the conflict in the study area was also part of this study. Accordingly, the study revealed the following findings and conclusion.

Conflict can't be happened in a vacuum; it involves important actors and factors. As a result, the conflict in the study area has its own root and intermediate (proximate) causes of the conflict. Based on the finding, the root causes of the conflict classified as economic and political factors. Economically, change in life style of some pastoralists' particularly new settlement foundation is one of the major underlying causes of the conflict between Bati

Oromo and Telalak Afar ethnic groups. This cause bit by bit transformed into the issue of territorial question around the border areas and which resulted to the commencement of new conflict modes. Politically, after Burka and Bistima kebeles (which were under Bati wereda administration previously) had been given to Afars, the issue of border demarcation became a new serious agenda between the two peoples.

Ethnic Federalism and Politicization of Ethnicity are the other structural factors contributed to the conflict escalation. Before the introduction of ethnic federalism, Afar and Wollo were under Wollo Kflehager. However, after commencement of ethnic federalism, Afar and Wollo were separated as a different national regional state, Zones, special Zone and special Woreda. This had become a means to get into computation for boundary and other resources.

Those root causes have been exacerbated several times due to many Intermediate (Proximate) Causes of the Conflict. Those motivating factors for the inter-ethnic conflict are the degradation of institutions' capacity in controlling the breakdown of rule of law and injustice, cattle rustling, charcoal production and deforestation at intersection areas of the two ethnic groups. When one of these illegal acts was performed by one of the conflicting parties, local governments prefers to remain silent instead of handing over criminal bodies. This situation most of the time ignites the strife and leads to the outbreak of violence, killing of individuals and property damage.

In order to solve the conflict, as the study finding disclosed, many attempts were taken by modern (the federal, regional and Zonal) and traditional institutions. However, the role of the regional government was minimal. It did not have more significant contribution for the resolution of the conflict. This is due to the fact that regional governments have a fear that the conflict may tack regional face. With respect to the role of federal government, it had rare intervention especially in mitigating the ignited conflict. Unlike the regional and federal government, the two Zones played ample contributions in containing and resolution process of the conflict. Among their efforts, establishing formal conflict protection and resolution offices, forming peace committees and efforts to enforce their decisions, organizing peace conferences at different times are the major ones.

However, their efforts to resolve the conflicts between Bati Oromo and Telalak Afar could not address the root causes of the conflict. In other words, the endeavour of the above stakeholders did not bear an expected fruit in the conflict resolution process. Several factors were responsible for the failure of those attempts. Those are incapacitation of elders in the

resolution process and high involvement of political elite in the conflict resolution and the complexity of the issue beyond the realm of traditional methods of conflict arbitration by local elders. Geo-political suitability of Afar, which is bordered with Eritrea and Djibouti, to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and some weaknesses of socio-cultural methods of conflict resolution, particularly, the way of compensation, were major difficulties which hindered the process of settling the conflict in the study area.

Moreover, lack of early warning and preventive mechanisms, lack of conflict sensitive development projects, local government institutional weakness and inadequate support from both regional governments and viewing it as elementary and typical, disregarding the root causes of the conflict undeniably made the conflict indestructible. Such conflicts were escalated and de-escalated by newly local, national and international emerging issues or dynamics. Primarily, the 2018 Political Reform in Ethiopia was one of the basic conflict dynamics that led to the release of prisoners, expansion of illegal arms' trade and the involvement of the TPLF and other actors as conflict instigators. Secondly, the outbreak of COVID-19 also had its effect on the Conflict. Thirdly, the involvement of both conflict parties, in the newly resumed conflict, is also one dynamics of the conflict.

Particularly, the resumption of Afar- Issa conflict at recent time made Telalak Afar to pause their serious conflict with Bati Oromo and diverts their attention into supporting their ethnic members against Issa. Similar to this, the outbreak of ethnic conflict between Amhara and Oromo in Kemise special zone and it's around also makes Bati Oromo to focus their attention into this conflict. More importantly, the recent conflict between the federal government and TPLF the attention of the Telalak Afar and Wollo Bati-Oromo ethnic groups, and thus, their conflict became deescalated.

## 7.2 Recommendations

The study investigated the nature and the dynamics of inter-ethnic conflicts in federal Ethiopia, by taking the case of Bati-Oromo and Telalak Afar ethnic groups since 1991. Accordingly, the root and causes the conflict, aggravating actors, the efforts made by different actors to solve the conflict and responsible factors for its failure, dynamics that escalated and deescalated the conflict at different levels and the current status of the conflict in the study area were empirically examined. The study emphasizes that managing, solving and transforming the conflict, and promoting strong people to people correlations not only significantly declines the magnitude of violent conflicts but also bring about mutual trust, sustainable peace and harmony in the study area. So as to realize this, the study suggested the following crucial recommendations as per the aforementioned objectives and corresponding findings.

First of all, it is recommended for all stakeholders to do the task of effective management and cooling down of the existing ignited conflict using coordinated efforts of respective administrators, peace committees, the police force, elders and religious fathers of both sides. In addition, controlling all conflict aggravating factors such as illegal gun firing, man killing, charcoal production, settlement expansion and cattle raiding, differentiating and controlling conflict instigators, and taking remorseless legal measures upon who commit crimes are of a significant role in cooling down the conflict. To do so, strong community policing network of all conflicting kebeles should be well established and coordinated.

Secondly, in the conflict area, the government has shown some efforts on conflict management. However, either the government or other actors who involve in the conflict management, resolution and transformation process should clearly aware of the root causes of the conflict between pastoralists of Afar and agro pastoralists of Oromo, and give emphasis to the prevention of the conflict before it becomes escalated. This study has identified political factors (poor boundary demarcation and politicization of ethnicity) and economic factors (new settlement foundation and territorial claim) as the fundamental causes of the conflict.

In case of territorial dispute, drawing a clear and permanent local political boundary in scientific and impartial way is important for sustainable peace. Therefore, the house of federation should intervene and give clear demarcation for the territorial dispute between these communities. For this purpose, conducting deep and scientific studies, which take into account their historical territorial ownership, the number of people who settle at the

conflicting area, the continuity of their social values and historical relationships plays a paramount importance. More importantly, taking remorseless measures upon administrators, who are involved in political commerce and igniting the conflict through invisibly supplying material and ideal support for different actors of the conflict, is advisable.

Thirdly, the primary actors who string out in this conflict are usually farmers and youths, and victims' families with the motives of ensuring economic opportunities and revenge respectively. Accordingly, to mitigate the first problem, it is recommended to establish and expand developmental projects as alternative sources of income. In addition, victim families have to gain appropriate compensation in terms of finance, material and moral support to inspire them for heartfelt forgiveness.

The study has disclosed that institutional drawbacks to enforce law and justice system were among the factors that contributed to instigate the conflict. Accordingly, successive training has to be given to administrators of various levels vis-à-vis human rights, rule of law, good governance and the danger of narrow mentality of ethnicity. This, in turn, helps to bring about a fundamental attitudinal change upon the larger community in relation to the aforementioned issues. In this regard, regional and Zonal governments of the two woredas are expected to assist kebele and woreda officials through giving material, financial and technical supports which are essential to organize discussions and forums whereby messages of peace, moral values, humanity, equality and transparency are conveyed.

As has been discussed earlier, the conflicting parties had solid, remarkable and age-old historical relations which are tied through inter-marriage, religion, mutual support during war and drought times, friendship (Keteyosos) and so forth. Therefore, strong assignments have to be done by local leaders and elders to indoctrinate these golden and valuable social values of the two communities to the present and coming generations. Moreover, it is also better to modernize indigenous or traditional conflict resolution institutions. For doing so, capacity building through continues workshops and trainings for local elders in preventing, managing and solving conflicts, and strengthening social networks and interactions among the two communities is advised.

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There are some additional references that are going to be added.

## Appendix- 1: List of Study Participants

### A. List of In-depth Interviewees

<b>FROM BATI WOREDA</b>						
Informant code	Sex	Ethnic group	Position	Place of interview	Date of interview	Remark
BWI-1	M	Oromo	Militia	Bati (Segno Gebeya)	9 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
BWI-2	M	Oromo	Government Official	Bati	9 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
BWI-3	M	Oromo	Farmer	Bati (Segno Gebeya)	8 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
BWI-4	M	Oromo	Semi-pastoral	Bati (Segno Gebeya)	8 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
BWI-5	M	Oromo	Farmer	Bati (Segno Gebeya)	8 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
BWI-6	M	Oromo	Semi-Pastoral	Bati (Segno Gebeya)	15 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
BWI-7	M	Oromo	Farmer	Bati (Segno Gebeya)	15 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
BWI-8	M	Oromo	Farmer	Bati (Segno Gebeya)	15 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
BWI-9	M	Amhara	Merchant	On trip (from Bati to Afar)	16 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
BWI-10	M	Oromo	Government Official	Bati	9 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
<b>FROM TELALAK</b>						
TWI-1	M	Afar	Pastoralist	Telalak (Hamus Gebeya)	22 <sup>nd</sup> March, 2021	
TWI-2	M	Afar	Semi-Pastoralist	Telalak (Hamus Gebeya)	22 <sup>nd</sup> March, 2021	
TWI-3	M	Afar	Pastoralist	Telalak (Hamus Gebeya)	29 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
TWI-4	M	Afar	Government official	Telalak	22 <sup>nd</sup> March, 2021	
TWI-5	M	Afar	Semi-Pastoralist	Telalak (Hamus Gebeya)	22 <sup>nd</sup> March, 2021	
TWI-6	M	Afar	Pastoralist (Victim)	Telalak (Hamus Gebeya)	22 <sup>nd</sup> March, 2021	
TWI-7	M	Afar	Pastoralist	Telalak (Hamus Gebeya)	29 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
TWI-8	M	Afar	Government Official	Telalak	22 <sup>nd</sup> March, 2021	

## B. List of Key Informant Interviewees

Code	Sex	Ethnic Group	Position	Place of interview	Date of Interview	Remark
BWK-1	M	Oromo	Woreda Administration	Bati	12 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
BWK-2	M	Oromo	Woreda Security	Bati	11 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
BWK-3	M	Oromo	Police Officer	Bati	14 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
BWK-4	M	Oromo	Local elder	Bati	6 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
BWK-5	M	Oromo	Local elder	Bati	6 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
BWK-6	M	Oromo	Religious Father	Bati	5 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
BWK-7	F	Oromo	Victim	Bati	12 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
BWK-8	M	Oromo	Victim	Bati	12 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
BWK-9	M	Oromo	Bati Woreda conflict management and resolution office	Bati	11 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
TWK-1	M	Afar	Woreda Administration	Telalak	21 <sup>st</sup> March, 2021	
TWK-2	M	Afar	Woreda Security	Telalak	20 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
TWK-3	M	Afar	Police Officer	Telalak	23 <sup>rd</sup> March, 2021	
TWK-4	M	Afar	Local elder	Telalak	19 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
TWK-5	M	Afar	Local elder	Telalak	19 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
TWK-6	M	Afar	Religious Father	Telalak	19 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
TWK-7	M	Afar	Victim	Telalak	24 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
TWK-8	M	Afar	Victim	Telalak	24 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
TWK-9	M	Amhara	Telalak Woreda conflict management and resolution office	Telalak	21 <sup>st</sup> March, 2021	

## C. FGD Participants

Code of participants	Sex	Ethnic Group	Position	Place of Discussion	Date of Interview	Remark
BWFGDM-1	M	Oromo	PCM	Bati	10 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
BWFGDM-2	M	Oromo	Religious father	Bati	10 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
BWFGDM-3	M	Oromo	PCM	Bati	10 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
BWFGDM-4	M	Oromo	Victim Farmer	Bati	10 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
BWFGDM-5	M	Oromo	Local elder	Bati	10 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
BWFGDM-6	M	Oromo	PCM	Bati	10 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
TWFGDM-1	M	Afar	PCM	Telalak	26 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
TWFGDM-2	M	Afar	Victim	Telalak	26 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
TWFGDM-3	M	Afar	PCM	Telalak	26 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
TWFGDM-4	M	Afar	Religious father	Telalak	26 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
TWFGDM-5	M	Afar	Local elder	Telalak	26 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	
TWFGDM-6	M	Afar	PCM	Telalak	26 <sup>th</sup> March, 2021	

### Key

BWFGDM----- Bati Woreda Focus Group Discussion Member

PCM----- Peace Committee Member

TWFGDM----- Telalak Woreda Focus Group Discussion Member

## Appendix-2: Interview Guide Questions

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE

CENTER FOR FEDERALISM AND GOVERNANCE STUDIES

Part one: Interview Guides for in-depth interviewees, key informants and focus group discussants for both Afar and Oromo Communities

### I. Introduction

Dear respondents, I am a post graduate student of Federalism and Governance Studies in Addis Ababa University. The purpose of this interview guide is to gather information in relation to “an inter-ethnic conflict between Telalak Afar and Bati Oromo since 1991. Therefore, the information that will provide is expected to be as accurate as possible. The information obtained from the interviewees and FGD participants will be used only for a research purpose. Dear participants, your response will be kept confidential and I kindly request you to participate voluntarily in this study.

**Thank You for Your Cooperation!**

### II. Main Body

1. How do you describe historical and socio-economic relationships of Telalak Afar and Bati Oromo ethnic communities?
2. Would you explain about the historical background of the conflict between Afar pastoralists and Bati Oromo ethnic groups?
3. What are the underlying/root/structural sources of the conflict in your view?
4. What kinds of actions could be taken as triggering factors of the conflict?
5. Are there newly emerged dynamics that contributed to escalate/deescalate the conflict?
6. What efforts were exerted by the stockholders to manage or resolve the conflict?
7. What were the responsible factors that contributed to the failure of conflict management/resolution process in bring about its intended objectives?
8. Would you explain about the present conflict situation between the two ethnic groups?

9. What will be the challenges and future prospects to bring about sustainable peace in the two Woredas?
10. What kinds of measures did the local and federal government take in resolving the conflict and in the peace building process? How do you evaluate their commitment?
11. As a responsible stakeholder, what kinds of mechanisms do you suggest to handle the conflict? What kinds of interventions do you think are important?
12. What kinds of limitations did you observe or understand in the process of resolving the conflict in the study area?
13. What kinds of roles should the local and federal governments play to prevent the reoccurrences of conflict in the study area?
14. In your understanding, what mechanisms do you recommend to bring about sustainable peace in the area?
15. Do you have any additional comments?

**Thank You in Advance for Your Cooperation!**

wku